Archimandrite Ioanichie Bălan

The Romanian Paterikon

"I want that this *Romanian Paterikon* - that together with *Hearths of Romanian Hermitage* and *Spiritual Dialogues* form a trilogy of the Romanian spirituality – to be a praise hymn dedicated to God, to the Mother of the Lord, and to all His saints. I want this *Romanian Paterikon* to be a modest gratitude tribute to my good brothers into Christ and to the believers from my country among whom I was born, and whom I cherish and I admire their faith, humbleness, patience, mercy, and love. This is the best I can do on earth during this passing life, the best I can offer to others, according to the gift entrusted to us by God, for which I know I will be held accountable on the day of the judgment. And I am asking my readers and my brothers nothing else but for forgiving my eventual shortcomings and to pray our Lord Jesus Christ for blessing these books and for the salvation of my soul."

Archimandrite Ioanichie Bălan

"One day, a widow living in the countryside came to him and told him, crying:

- Father, I am widow and I have seven children. My milk-cow has died recently, and I have no money for buying another.

- Don't mind, mother, don't cry. How much is it worth a milk-cow?

- It is a thousand currency units.

- Lo, take these two thousand currency units, and buy two milk-cows. Thank Pious Parascheva for that, and don't tell to anybody.

So understood Father Barlaam how to fulfill the Gospel of Christ."

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Content

1	Preface (to the first edition)	1
2	Introduction	2
3	Holy Martyrs from the Centuries III-IV	5
4	Bishop Evangelicus of Tomis (290-300)	6
5	The Holy Martyrs Epictetus the Priest and Astion the Monk († 290)	7
6	Saint Sanctified Martyr Ephraim – Bishop of Tomis (Century IV)	8
7	Holy Martyrs Tit sand Gordian – Bishops of Tomis (Century IV)	9
8	Saitn Martys Zotic, Atal, Camasius, OPhilip, and other 31 Martyrs from Niculiţel (Century IV – 4th of June)	10
9	An Unknown Bishop of Tomis (Century IV)	12
10	The Holy Great Martys Sava (13th of April 372)	13
11	Saints and Pious Fathers form the Centuries III-IV	17
12	Saint Martyr Nicetas (the Roman) († 372)	18
13	Priest Sansala (Century IV)	18
14	Pious Eutychus (Century IV)	19
15	Saint Hierarch Bretanion (Vetration) – Bishop of Tomis (Century IV)	20
16	Bishop Gerontius (Terentius) of Tomis (ca. 380-390)	21
17	Saint Hierarch Theotimus I – the "Husband" (Centuries IV-V)	22
18	Saint John Cassian (ca. 360-435)	24
19	Saint Cassian the Roman – towards Bishop Castor – On the Eight Thoughts of the Evilness	27
	I. About the Restraint of the Belly	27
	II. About the Devil of the Fornication and of the Bodily Lust	29
	III. About the Love for Money	32
	IV. About Anger	37
	V. About Sadness	42
	VI. About Idleness	43
	VII. About the Vain Glory	45
	VIII. About Pride	46
20	Pious Gherman the Dacian-Roman (Centuries IV-V)	48
21	Bishop Timothy of Tomis (the first half of the Century V)	49
22	Bishop John of Tomis (Century V)	50
23	Bishop Alexander of Tomis (Century V)	50
24	Bishop Theotimus II of Tomis (the second half of the Century V)	51
25	Pious Dionysus the Small (the "Roman") (cs. 470-545)	52
26	Pious John Maxentius (Centuries V-VI)	54
27	Metropolitan Paternus of Tomis (the first half of the Century VI)	55
28	Metropolitan Valentinian of Tomis (Century VI)	56
29	Saint and Pious from the Century VII-XII	58
30	Pious Damian and Pious Joseph - The Monastic Settlement from Basarabi – Constanţa (Centuries IX-X)	59

31	Saint Gregory of Decapolis – From Bistriţa to Vâlcea (Centuries VIII-IX)	60
32	Saint Parascheva from Iaşi – Celebrated on 14th of October (Century XI)	66
33	Saint Dimitrius the New from Bucharest – 27th of October (Centuries XII-XIII)	74
34	Saint Martyr Philothea from Argeş – 7th of December (Century XIII)	77
35	Metropolitan Theodor of Vicina (the second half of the Century XIII)	79
36	Saints and Pious from Centuries XIII-XV	81
37	Saint Martyr John the New from Suceava (2nd/24th of June) († 1330)	82
38	Metropolitan Makarios of Vicina (ca. 1337-1377)	87
39	Metropolitan Hyacinth of Vicina - the first metropolitan of the Romanian Country (1359-1372)	88
40	Pious Gherman the Hieromonk – the first abbot of Neamţ Monastery (1320-1362)	89
41	Pious Cyprian the Hieroschemamonk – the second abbot of Neamţ Monastery (1320-1362)	90
42	Pious Agathon the Hermit – Buzău Mountains (Century XIV)	91
43	Pious Dionysus the Hermit - Buzău Mountains (Century XIV)	92
44	Pious Joseph the Hermit - Buzău Mountains (Century XIV)	93
45	And Anonymous Romanian Saint – from Neamţ Monastery (Century XIV)	94
46	Pious Sophrony, Poemen, and Silouan - Neamţ Monastery (Century XIV-XV)	95
47	Saint Nicodemus from Tismana Monastery († 26th of December 1406)	96
48	Pious Pachomius the Hieromonk – Patriarchal Exarch and Abbot of Peri Monastery from Maramureş (Centuries XIV-XV)	98
49	Metropolitan Iosif Muşat – the first hierarch of Moldavia (1402-1415)	99
50	Pious Dometian the Archimandrite – great abbot of Monasteries Neamţ and Bistriţa (1407 – ca. 1415)	101
51	Pious Gavril the Hieromonk – the first abbot of Cozia Monastery (Centuries XIV-XV)	102
52	Saitn Leontius from Rădăuţi – Bogdana Monastery (Centuries XIV-XV)	103
53	Pious Makarios the Hieromonk – the founder of Boiştea – Neamţ Monastery (Centuries XIV-XV)	105
54	Pious Job the Hermit – Bogdăneşti Monastery (Centuries XIV-XV)	106
55	Pious Sylvester the Hermit from Sylvester – Ceahlău Hermitage (Century XV)	106
56	Saint Basil from Moldoviţa (Century XV)	107
57	Pious Agapius the Hermit - the founder of Agapia Older Monastery (Century XV)	108
58	Monk Philotheos the Hymnographer – Cozia Monastery (Centuries XIV-XV)	109
59	Pious Gavril Uric the Writer - Neamţ Monastery (Centuries XIV-XV)	110
60	Pious Silouan the Hieroschemamonk – great abbot of Neamţ Monastery (1422-1448)	111
61	Pious Iosif from Bisericani - Neamţ Hermitage (Century XV)	112
62	Pious Ftahers Simion, Methodius, Barnaba, Peter, Averchie, Gherman, Pir, and Greek (?) – the disciples of Pious Iosif from Bisericani (Century XV)	113
63	Metropolitan Teoctist I of Moldavia and Suceava (1452-1477)	114
64	Saint Daniil the Hermit – Voroneţ Monastery (Century XV)	115

65	Pious Misail the Hieroschemamonk – abbot of Voroneţ Monastery (Century XV)	122
66	Pious Ephraem the Hieroschemamonk – abbot of Voroneţ Monastery (Centuries XV-XVI)	123
67	Pious John the Monk - Voroneţ Monastery (Centuries XV-XVI)	124
68	Pious Iosaphat the Archimandrite – the first abbot of Putna Monastery (1470-1484)	125
69	Pious Cassian the Monk – Putna Monastery (Century XV)	126
70	Pious Basil the Monk – Putna Monastery (Century XV)	127
71	Pious Nicodemus the Hieromonk – Putna Monastery (Century XV)	128
72	Pious Chiriac the Schemamonk – Putna Monastery (Century XV)	129
73	Pious Jacob the Schemamonk – Putna Monastery (Century XV)	130
74	Pious Athanasius the Teacher – Moldoviţa Monastery († 1490)	130
75	Pious Stahie – Abbot of Probota Monastery (Century XV)	131
76	Pious Gerontius the Hieroschemamonk – Abbot of Humor Monastery (Century XV)	132
77	Hermits of Sucevița Valley – Sucevița Monastery (Century XV)	133
78	Pious Ftahers from the Centuries XV-XVI	135
79	Archimandrite Gregory from Bistriţa-Neamţ Monastery (1490-1500)	136
80	Pious Calistrat the Hermit - Sucevița Monastery (Century XV-XVI)	136
81	Pious Simeon the Hermit – the founder of Pîngăraţi Monastery (Century XV)	137
82	Pious Archimandrite Paisius – the second abbot of Putna Monastery	138
83	Pious Spiridon the Monk – Putna Monastery (Centuries XV-XVI)	139
84	Pious Paladius the Calligrapher – Putna Monastery (Centuries XV-XVI)	140
85	Pious Eustatius the Chief-Singer – Putna Monastery (Centuries XV-XVI)	141
86	Pious Paladius the Hermit – Putna Monastery (Centuries XV-XVI)	142
87	Pious Chiriac the Hermit – Neamţ Monastery (Centuries XV-XVI)	143
88	Pious Euphrosyne the Hermit – the Older Agapia Hermitage (Centuries XV-XVI)	143
89	The Hermits from the Chairs' Mountain - the Older Agapia Hermitage (Centuries XV-XVI)	144
90	Saint Hierarch Nephon – Metropolitan of The Romanian Country († 1508) (11th of August)	146
91	Pious John from Prislop (Centuries XV-XVI)	151
92	Metropolitan Gheorghe I of Moldavia and Suceava (1477-1508)	153
93	Metropolitan Teoctist II of Moldavia and of Suceava (1508-1528)	155
94	Saint Innocentius from Probota (Centuries XV-XVI)	155
95	Pious Pachomius the Schemamonk 0 the founder of Bistriţa Monastery – Vîlcea County	156
96	Pious Peon the Hermit – Ceahlău mountain (Centuries XV-XVI)	156
97	Sein Hierarch Gelasius – Great Abbot of Rîmeţ Monastery – Alba County (Centuries XV-XVI)	157
98	Pious Anthony the Chief-Singer – Putna Monastery (Century XVI)	159
99	Hieromonk Amphilochius – the first abbot of Pîngăraţi Monastery († 1570)	159
100	Saint Eustatius from Probota (Century XVI)	161
101	Metropolitan Theophanous I of Moldavia and of Suceava (1534-1546)	162
102	Metropolitan Grigorie Roşea of Moldavia and of Suceava († 1570)	163

103	Bishop Makarius of Roman († 1558)	165
104	Pious Paisius the Hieromonk – Abbot of Humor Monastery (Century XVI)	166
105	Pious Pachomius the Hermit – the founder of Slatina Monastery (Century XVI)	168
106	Pious Jacob the Worthy – the first abbot of Slatina Monastery (Century XVI)	169
107	Pious Zosimus the Hieroschemamonk – the founder of the Secu Monastery (Century XVI)	170
108	Pious Moses, Prochor, Benjamin, Spiridon, Chiriac, Besarion, Stephen, and Athanasius – Hermits on Secu Valley (Century XVI)	171
109	Pious John the Hermit – Hermitage's Valley (Century XVI)	172
110	Pious Silvan the Hieromonk – the first abbot of Rîşca Monastery († 1579)	172
111	Pious Job the Hermit - Rîşca Monastery (Century XVI)	173
112	Bishop Isaiah of Rădăuţi († 1592)	174
113	Metropolitan Theophanous II – Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava († 1598)	175
114	Pious Fathers form the Centuries XVI-XVII	178
115	John the Archbishop - Rîşca Monastery (Century XVI-XVII)	179
116	Pious John the Hermit - Rîşca Monastery (Century XVI-XVII)	180
117	Pious Ftahers Eulogius, Poemen, Misail, Basil, and Paisius – the Older Agapia Hermitage (Century XVI-XVII)	181
118	Pious Archimandrite Philotheos the Teacher – Putna Monastery (Century XVI-XVII)	182
119	Pious Ieremia the Romanian (the Vlach) (1556-1625)	183
120	Hieroschemamonk Dositheos the Teacher – abbot of Zosimus Hermitage – Secu (1582-1606)	186
121	Pious Isaiah the Hermit – Moldoviţa Monastery (Centuries XVI-XVII)	187
122	Pious Vucol, Gigeon, and Gherman – hermits on Ceahlău Mountain (Century XVI-XVII)	188
123	Pious Pancratius the Archimandrite – Sucevița Monastery (Centuries XVI-XVII)	189
124	Bishop Ephraim of Rădăuţi – Moldoviţa Monastery († 1629)	190
125	Metropolitan Anastasius Crimca of Moldova and of Suceava († 1631)	191
126	The Testament of Metropolitan Atanasius Crimca written on the *Apostle* form Vienna	195
127	Pious Ioanichie the Schemamonk	195
128	Pious Hermits Daniil and Misail – the founders of Turnu Monastery (Century XVII)	196
129	Pious Neophite the Hermit – Little-Sheep_Corral Hermitage – Argeş County (Century XVII)	197
130	Pious Meletius the Hermit – Little-Sheep_Corral Hermitage – (Century XVII)	198
131	Saint Hierarch Iorest the Confessor – Metropolitan of Ardeal († 1657)	198
132	Saint Epiphanius from Voroneţ (Century XVII)	199
133	Saint Hierarch Iosif the new from Partoş – the Metropolitan of Timişoara († 1656)	200
134	Saint Martyr John the Vlach (the Romanian) († 1662)	201
135	Metropolitan Barlaam of Moldavia and of Suceava (1632-1653)	202
136	Pious Athanasius the Hieroschemamonk	209
138	Hermits Iosif, Parthenius, Paul, and Others, with their disciples – Founders of	

	Hermitage Monastery (1655)	210
139	Saint Raphael from Agapia (Centuries XVI-XVII)	211
140	Saint Parthenius from Agapia († 1660)	212
141	Saint Chiriac from BIsericani († 1660)	213
142	Saint Chriac from Tazlău († 1660)	214
143	Pious Onuphrius the Hermit – the Hermitage of Tazlău Monastery (Century XVII)	213
144	Pious Sylvester, Job, and Agathon – the Hermitage of Tazlău Monastery (Century XVII)	216
145	Metropolitan Dositheos of Moldavia and of Suceava (1624-1693)	217
146	Pious Lazarus the Hermit – Putna Hermitage (Century XVII – the beginning of the Century XVIII)	219
147	Pious Casiana the Schema-Nun – Casiana Hermitage – Ceahlău (Century XVII)	220
148	Pious Schema-Nun Sophia – Sophia Hermitage – Ceahlău (Century XVII)	220
149	Pious Schema-Nun Melania – Durău Hemritage – Ceahlău (Century XVII)	221
150	Pious Fathersa from the Centuries XVII-XVIII	223
151	Pious Barsanuphius the Hermit – Abbot of Hihpăstria Hermitage (Centuries XVII-XVIII)	224
152	Pious Paul the Hermit – the confessor of Saint Theodora from Sihla (the second half of the Century XVII)	224
153	Saint Theodora from Sihla (Centuries XVII-XVIII)	226
154	Saint Elefterios the Hermit – Sihla Hermitage (Centuries XVII-XVIII)	230
155	Bishop Metrophanes of Buzău († 1702)	230
156	Pious Simeon the Hemrit and His Disciples – Sihăstria Hermitage – Ceahlău († 1704)	232
157	Pious PataPIOS AND Pious Nicandru – Hermits on Ceahl[u Mountain (Centuries XVII-XVIII)	233
158	Metropolitan Theodosius of the Romanian Country (b.1620-†1708)	233
159	Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul (ca. 1650-1716)	234
160	Bishop Pachomius of Roman	246
161	Pious Mavra from Ceahlău (Centuries XVII-XVIII)	249
162	Pious Anthony the Hermit – Iezerul-Vîlcea Hermitage (Centuries XVII-XVIII)	251
163	Saint Bessarion the confessor (1714-ca. 1745) – 21st of October	252
164	Pious John the Archimandrite – the first abbot of Horezu Monastery († 1726)	253
165	Hermits from the Glade's Refectory – Sihăstria Valley (Centuries XVII-XVIII)	254
166	Pious Agathon the Hermit – Agathon Monastery – Botoşani County (Century ZXVIII)	255
167	Pious Isaiah the Hermit – Sucevița Monastery (Century XVIII)	256
168	Pious Sebastian the Hermit – the founder of Hermit Hermitage – Vrancea County (Century XVIII)	256
169	Bishop Ioanichie of Roman – the founder of Vovidenia Hermitage – Neamț County (Century XVIII)	257
170	Pious Basil the Hieroschemamonk – abbot of Poiana Mărului Hermitage († 1767)	258
171	Letter towards the All-Pious and My Spiritual Son into Christ, Hieroschemamonk Mister Alexius	264
172	Saint Sophrony the Confessor – Cioara-Sebeş Monastery (Century XVIII)	268

173	Pious Raphael the Hymnographer – Horezu Monastery (Century XVIII)	269
174	Pious Sila the Hieroschemamonk – abbot of Putna Hermitage (Century XVIII)	270
175	Archimandrite Bartholomew Măzăreanul – Putna Monastery (1710-1780)	271
176	Pious Onuphrius the Hermit – Vorona Hermitage († 1789)	273
177	Pious Paisius the Great – Great Abbot of Neamț Monastery (1722-1794)	275
178	Pious Procopius (Picu) Pătruț – Sălişte – Sibiu County (1818-1872)	294
179	Metropolitan of Ardeal, Andrei Şaguna (1808-1873)	295
180	Schemamonk Gordie the Hermit – Neamț Monastery († 1870)	301
181	Hieroschemamonk Orest Baldovin – The Monastic cell of Saint Hypatius – Vatopedi – Mount Athos († 1878)	302
182	Saint Antipas from Athos – Valaam Monastery (1786-1887)	304
183	Confessor Josaphat Apostoliu – Neamț Monastery (1764-1883)	306
184	Archimandrite Theophanous Cristea – The New Neamț Monastery	307
185	Schema-Nun Tavefta Ursache – Agapia Monastery († 1883)	308
186	Archimandrite Gherman Ionescu – Tazlău Monastery – Neamț († 1885)	309
187	Hieroschemamonk Neophyte Eliade – Neamț Monastery († 1886)	311
188	Archimandrite Timothy Ionescu – abbot of Neamț Monastery (1806-1887)	312
189	Nun Euphrosyne Lazy – Văratec Monastery (1797-1888)	315
190	Pious Schemamonk Axentie the Hermit - Great Ascetic at Mount Athos († 1980)	316
191	Archimandrite Andronic Popovici – New Neamț Monastery (1820-1893)	317
192	Archimandrite Nectarius Banul – Mount Tabor (1818 – ca. 1900)	318
193	Bishop Melchizedek Şefănescu – Roman Bishopric (1823-1892)	319
194	Hieroschemamonk Nephon Ionescu – the true founder of the Romanian Hermitage Prodromul – Mount Athos (1807-1901)	322
195	Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu of Moldavia and of Suceava (1818-1902)	324
196	Schema-Nuns Fevronia, Sophia, and Olumpiada Iurașcu – Agafton Monastery – Botoşani County († 1902)	332
197	Pious Nectareos the Chief-Singer – the Romanian Hermitage Prodromul – Mount Athos (1808-1898)	333
198	Hieromonk Iosif the Chief-Singer – Neamț Monastery (1849?)	336
199	Schema-Nun Olimpiada – the founder of Văratec Monastery (1757-1842)	338
200	Schemamonk Nicanor – Sohostria Monastery – Neamț County († 1844)	339
201	Pious Justin the Hieroschemamonk – the first founder of Prodromul Hermitage – Mount Athos	339
202	The Holy Hermit – from the small cave of Ialomicioara (Century XIX)	341
203	Bishop Caesarius of Buzău (1784-1846)	342
204	Metropolitan Venianim Costachi of Moldavia and of Suceava (1758-1846)	343
205	Pastoral Letter Given to the Roman Eparchy (probably in the year 1796)	357
206	Pious Calinic the Hermit – Horaița Monastery – Neamț County (Century XIX)	359
207	Pious Xenia the Schema-Nun – Agapia Monastery (Centuries XVIII-XIX)	360
208	Pious Fathers from the Second Half of the Century XIX	363
209	Archimandrite Neonil Buzilă – Great Abbot of Neamț Monastery (1789-1853)	364
210	Hieroschemamonk Valerian – Sihăstria Monastery – Neamț County (1790-1860)	370
211	Pious Pachomius the Hermit – Ialomicioara Cave Hermitage (Century XIX)	371
212	Schema-Nun Safta Brâncoveanu – Văratec Monastery (1776-1857)	372

213	Archimandrite Irinarh Rosetti – Horaiţa Monastery – Mount Tabor (1771-1859)	373
214	Archimandrite Bessarion Făgărăşanul – the founder of Coco Monastery (1779-1862)	381
215	Hermit Gherasim – the Crazy for Christ – Neamţ Monastery (Century XIX)	382
216	Pious Pachomius the Hermit – Pocrov Hermitage – Neamţ (Century XIX) – A Very Useful Story	383
217	Hieroschemamonk Jonah – Abbnot of Sihla Hermitage – Neamţ (Century XIX)	384
218	Saint Hierarch Calinic – from Cernica Monastery (1787-1868)	385
219	Teaching Word of Saint Hierarch Calinic - uttered towards the whole community, in September 1850, when he left after being appointed Bishop of Rîmnicu-Vîlcea	4021
220	Epistle no. 88 of Saint Hierarch Calinic from Rîmnicu-Vîlcea, addressed to the community of Cernica Monastery	404
221	Confessor Iosaphat Apostoliu – Neam Monastery (1764-1883)	405
222	Pious Fathers from the Firts Half of the Century XX	
223	Hieroschemamonk Vasian Panaite – Abbot of Pocrov Hermitage – Neamţ (1821-1903)	409
224	Hieroschemamonk Sava Popescu – Stănişoara Monastery – Argeş (1830-1904)	410
225	Pious Dometie the Monk – Neamţ Monastery	411
226	Schemamonk Athanasius Popescu – Stănioşara Monastery – Argeş († 1907)	412
227	Pious Archimandrite Irodion Ionescu – the confessor of Saint Calinic – Lainic Hermitage – Gorj († 1900)	414
228	Archimandrite Chiriac Nicolau – Neamţ Monastery (1839-1907)	415
229	Hieroschemamonk Nectareous – Alma-Neamţ Monastery (1835-1912)	416
230	Old Man Gherman Lazarus – Văratec Monastery (1846-1916)	417
231	Monk Sylvester Ailincăi – Durau-Neamţ Monastery († 1919)	425
232	Schemamonk Irinarchus Şişman – Prodromul Hermitage – Mount Athos (1845-1920)	426
233	Nun Mary Sturza – Agapia Monastery († 1920)	428
234	Archimandrite Bessarion Ionescu – Abbot of Cernica Monastery (1847-1921)	429
235	Archimandrite Callistos Gheorghiu – Neamţ Monastery (1853-1923)	430
236	Hermit Gherasim Greeruş – Caşin Mountains – Bacău († 1925)	431
237	Nun Elisabeth Vlahuţă – Agapia Monastery (1850-1925)	432
238	Schema-Nun Suzanna Şefănescu – Războieni Monastery – Neamţ County (1830-1925)	432
239	Protosyncellus Gideon Georgescu – Abbot of Prodromul Hermitage – Mount Athos (1840-1925)	433
240	Nun Xenia Velisarie – Agafton Monastery (1852-1926)	434
241	Nun Epraxia Demi – Agapia Monastery (1832-1926)	434
242	Protosyncellus Porphyry Bucurescu – Frăsinei Monastery – Vîlcea County (1862-1927)	435
243	Hierarch Valerian Şefănescu – Roman Bishopric (1825-1928)	436
244	Hieroschemamonk Elijah Vulpe – Great Confessor of the Athonite Fathers (1851-1928)	438
245	Hierodeacon Christopher the Hermit - Sihla Hermitage (1930) A Very Useful	

	Story	440
246	Rasophore Basil Elijah – Sihăstria Monastery (1902-1931)	442
247	Monk Gherasim Elijah – Sihăstria Monastery (1904-1933)	444
248	Hieromonk Barlaam Vîntu – Mount Athos (1833-1934)	447
249	Monk Hilary Ionică – Sihăstria Monastery († 1934)	448
250	Nun Matrona Domnaru – Horezu Monastery (1852-1935)	449
251	Hieroschemamonk Gelasius Maloviceanu – Cernica Monastery (1858-1936)	450
252	Monk Mina Diaconescu – Turnu Monastery (1856-1936)	451
253	Schema-Nun Isidora the Hermit – Sihla Hermitage – Neamţ († 1937)	452
254	Nun Melitina Beu – Văratec Monastery (1860-1938)	453
255	Nun Domnica Dumitrescu – Nămăeşti Monastery – Muscel County (1858-1938)	454
256	Monk Hilary Radu – Metropolitan Cathedral – Iaşi (1871-1938)	454
257	Monk Stephen the Hermit – Saint Sava Monastery – Bethlehem († 1939)	455
258	Hermits Partenie and Gherasim – Sihăstria Monastery († 1940)	456
259	Archimandrite Gregory Georgescu – Cheia Monastery – Prahova County (1861-1940)	457
260	Pious Joel the Monk – Peştera Ialomicioarei Hermitage († 1940)	458
261	Monk Job Burlacu – Neamţ Monastery (1874-1941)	459
262	Archimandrite Antipa Dinescu – Prodromul Hemritage – Mount Athos (1852-1942)	462
263	Archimandrite Barlaam Archirescu – Metropolitane of Moldavia and Suceava (1863-1942)	462
264	Monk Ioanichie Sturzu – Secu Monastery (1880-1943)	465
265	Nun Epiharia Moisescu – Bistriţa Monastery – Vîlcea County (1870-1943)	465
266	Protosyncellus Iosif Crăciun – Neamţ Monastery (1864-1944)	466
267	Protosyncellus Ioanichie Moroi – Sihăstria Monastery (1859-194)	468
268	Schemamonk Gregory Bica – Ciolacu Monastery – Buzău County († 1945)	474
269	Protosyncellus Gideon Verencius – Vorona Hermitage – Botoani County (1891-1945)	476
270	Protosyncellus Vichentie Mălău – Secu Monastery (1887-1945)	477
271	Pious Vitalie the Monk – The Holy Mountain Athos (1891-1945)	497
272	Monk Galaction Elijah – Sihăstria Monastery	498
273	Monk Gervais Gaşpar – Sihăstria Monastery (1925-1948)	501
274	Pious Fathers from the Second Half of the Century XIX	502
275	Protosyncellus Antim Găină – Secu Monastery – 1894-1974)	504
276	Protosyncellus Calistrat Bobu – Vasiova Monastery – Banat (1900-1975)	507
277	Archimandrite Dometie Manolache – Rîme Monastery – Alba County (1924-1975)	507
278	Bishop Caesar Păunescu of the Lower Danube (1888-1975)	510
279	Protosyncellus Nicodemus Mândiţă – Agapia Monastery (1889-1975)	514
280	Monk Benjamin Iorga – Sihăstria Monastery (1891-1976)	524
281	Protosyncellus Joachim Spătaru – Neam Monastery (1896-1976)	528
282	Archimandrite Chrysostom Postolache – Bucium Hermitage – Iaşi County (1884-1979)	529
283	Afterword to the English translation	530
284	Romanian Pious Fathers and Confessors Canonized in the year 2024 – credits to	531

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Preface
(To the first edition)

The present book ids the fruit of some long efforts of the Father Archimandrite Ioanichie Bălan. Animated by a tireless search for manifested like a vocation, His Piousness traveled to all corners of our blessed Romanian country in order to unveils its spiritual treasures. And his efforts have been rewarded plentifully. He researched and he gathered numerous "pearls of great price" in personalities and their words of precious spiritual advice, of a big number of Romanian improved monks and hierarchs, who have been living during centuries on all our Motherland's countries, and thus he highlighted on this way too the spiritual unity of our people. He placed all of these under the title of The Romanian Paterikon*, a Paterikon that will honorably stay next to other books of this genre produced by other Orthodox peoples.*

The vast majority of the persons mentioned in this nook have been found worthy of a high living into Christ, and they were true embodiments of an untold love for people and for God, by fulfilling the Gospel in diverse forms of spiritual living, most of them living in monastic communities, while others, according to their mystical call, they lived for a while as hermits, but without spiritually isolating themselves from their fellow humans. By sacrificially and exemplarily overcoming the weaknesses and the passions of the nature, as also the devil's temptations, each one in his way united the prayer with the obedience as two wings of the spiritual progress, they advised, the wrote, they built up settlements which are illustrious witnesses up to these days; they have been ceaselessly imparted by a spirit of exceptional sacrificial power, showing to us, as one can see also in this Paterikon, the true spiritual moments for all the times. Essentially, the cojoining in this admirable equilibrium of the two dimensions – the love for God and the love for people / serving in the spirit of the Gospel that characterizes as united these lives – it shows in a living mode what the holiness meant to them and what this holiness of their meant in the middle of the rightly-worshipper people. It is enough here to cite one of the advices of the great Metropolitan Veniamin Costache: "If each of us does everything he can towards the good of the Church, of the motherland, and of the mankind, our city won't perish". In this spirit of broad openness and expression of love, of holiness, and of serving, it is composed this book.

In the same time, the present work has a second importance as well. It is meant to scatter the opinion spread in the world abroad.

Introduction

The Paterikons are, together with the *Lives of the Saints*, the most representative books of the monks, being written about the best among monks. By and large, all Paterikons are inspired by the renown *Egyptian Paterikon* dating from the IV Century, know today all over the Christian world as a spiritual guidance book of prime importance. While the Philokalia systematically presents methods for Christian consummation, to the monks and to the general believers the Paterikons present only simple wise sayings, advices, building-of-soul happenings, true stories and deeds, gathered form the most skilled monks, from hermits, from abbots, from spiritual advisers, and even from hierarchs, and offered to everyone as guide on the path of the salvation into Jesus Christ.

Starting from the Paterikon of the Egyptian Fathers, the Paterikons inspired by it have been getting diversified, and they partially have changed their structure, each one bringing something new. Some of them focused on giving words of wisdom. Others, most of them, focused on presenting useful-to-soul deeds, and true and moralizing stories and happenings, all of them recounted by using a simple and direct language, without themes or interpretations. Among these Paterikons we are mentioning here: the *Limonarion*, the *Lavsaicon*, the *Everghetinos*, written during the centuries V-X, as also the *Paterikon Pecerscii*, dating from the last centuries, all of them enjoying a wide spreading and numerous translations. In our country circulated also another sort of Paterikons, the so-called *fitășnice*[1] from the Slavonic oteț[2] = father). They contain in addition to the sayings taken from the mentioned Paterikons, also brief presentations of the lives of the saints and fragments from the teachings of the Holy Fathers.

Due to the fact that the old Romanian Paterikons in manuscripts, dating form the Centuries XVII – XIX, which of course existed, they have been lost, we were among the few Orthodox countries not having such a book that constitutes the spiritual mirror of the autochthonous monasticism. *The Romanian Paterikon*, written with the blessing of Patriarch Justinian and printed in the year 1980 at the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian orthodox Church in 6000 copies, it has been quickly exhausted, being spread in the country and abroad. *The Romanian Paterikon* constitutes a novelty in what regards the genre of the Romanian spiritual literature, and it fills up a big void, being of a real spiritual benefit both to the monks and to our good Christians.

The Romanian Paterikon has been translated abroad, until now, in two languages in the Greek language, through the mediation of the Athonite monks and it has been printed at Thessaloniki in the year 1985, and, partially in the French language, in Belgium, printed in the year 1986.

[1] Romanian archaic word belonging to the churchly technolect.
[2] Romanian transliteration of the Slavonic word.

But the first edition of *The Romanian Paterikon* contains only pious fathers who lived during the Century XIV-XX, and that is a major deficiency, because one could draw the conclusion that the monasticism appeared on the territory of our motherland only in the beginning of the Century XIV.

Therefore, on one hand, by seeing the spiritual importance of *The Romanian Paterikon* for our monks and believers, as also the contribution of this book to valuing our millennial Orthodox tradition, and on the other hand the interest had in it by some Christian Churches from abroad, we are publishing the second edition revised and much improved, with the blessing of His Eminence Antim, the Archbishop of Tomis and of the Lower Danube. The present edition comprises many new texts. There have been added a number of 42 Pious Fathers, especially Martyrs from the Centuries IV-XIV, so that thus has been covered also the first Christian millennium on the territory of our country, and for the Centuries XIV-XX there have been added other eight new Pious Fathers missing from the first edition. Also, it has been improved and completed, as much as possible, the text of the first edition with new data reckons by us as necessary.

The Pious Fathers, the Martyrs, and the great hierarchs introduced by us in this second edition, we have taxonomized them on centuries according to the known chronological criterion, placing an equal accent both on the hagiographical side and on the spiritual side – teaching words, advices towards their disciples, wonderful deeds and soul-building stories, so searched for and appreciated by readers. We have especially presented the blessed hierarchs of Tomis from the centuries IV-VI and the greatest Dacian-Roman martyrs from that epoque, for they contributed the most to Christianization and to spreading and preserving the Christian Orthodox faith on the land of our country. The same hierarchs from Tomis brought and maintained the monastic life in Dobrogea[3] and then in the North of Danube and they opposed steadfastly the heresies searching for refuge at the mouths of Danube.

These holy hierarchs from Tomis and these pious Dacian-Romans are the first founders, the first shepherds known and famous theologians of the Romanian Christian Orthodoxy and monasticism from sixteen centuries ago. They tied us so much to the great Cappadocian Fathers led with Saint Basil the Great, as also to Saint John Chrysostom, both of them unequalled up to these days, and, especially, to the Holy Country and to the Tomb of the Lord, which is the foundation of our Orthodox faith. That's why we owe them so much. We grant the same honor to the martyrs from the South and from the North of Danube, who sealed with their blood the seed of the Gospel thrown by Saint Apostle Andrew in Dobrogea, because the word without blood will die, it cannot fructify, it neither lasts over centuries.

The string of the saints from the first millennium it continued with the saints whose relics have chosen as their motherland the blessed land of our country.

[3] Historical province of the today's Romania. (English language translator's note; in continuation: E. l. t.'s n.)

To the saints from Dobrogea from the first Christian centuries, we have added in this *Romanian Paterikon*, with the same zeal and gratitude, the Pious Paraskeva from Iasi, the Saint Martyr John the New from Suceava, and the Saints Gregory from Decapolis, Dimitros the New and Philotea from Argeş. For hundreds of years, the relics and the prayers of these saints took care of the people in trouble, they healed the sick, and they maintained the Christian Orthodox faith in our villages and cities, by confessing Christ more than we do.

I want that this *Romanian Paterikon* - that together with *Hearths of Romanian Hermitage* and *Spiritual Dialogues* form a trilogy of the Romanian spirituality – to be a praise hymn dedicated to God, to the Mother of the lord, and to all His saints. I want this *Romanian Paterikon* to be a modest gratitude tribute to my good brothers into Christ and to the believers from my country among whom I was born, and whom I cherish and I admire their faith, humbleness, patience, mercy, and love. This is the best I can do on earth during this passing life, the best I can offer to others, according to the gift entrusted to us by God, for which I know I will be held accountable on the day of the judgment. And I am asking my readers and my brothers nothing else but for forgiving my eventual shortcomings and to pray our Lord Jesus Christ for blessing these books and for the salvation of my soul.

I thank from the bottom of my heart to His Eminence Antim, the Archbishop of Tomis and of the Lower Danube, for giving me his high blessing and approval for reprinting *The Romanian Paterikon* to the publishing house of this Archbishopric. I thank to all my collaborators and together-praying brothers, who helped me to put together this book, a book which I want it to be towards the praise of the All-Holy Trinity and towards the benefit of my nation.

Archimandrite Ioanichie Bălan

Holy Martyrs from the Centuries III-IV

BISHOP EVANGELICUS
Of Tomis
(290-300)[4]

This blessed descendant of the Holy Apostle Andrew is the first known bishop of the Tomis Eparchy (today's Constanţa), from Pontic Dacia (Scythia Minor-Dobrogea). Bishop Evangelicus shepherded the autochthonous Getes-Dacians-Romans believers from the Danube's mouths and from all Pontic Dacia, during the last decade of the Century III. Of course, the Bishopric of Tomis existed long before that time, for the Christianity was sown on the territory of our country by Saint Apostle Andrew, the first called apostle, even from the first half of the first Christian century, as Eusebius of Caesarea († 340) says in his book *Churchly History*.

Bishop Evangelicus, originating from Tracia, he converted to the faith into Christ many inhabitants from Scythia Minor, who still had remained into the darkness of the paganism. He is mentioned in the martyrdom act of the Saints Epictetus the Priest and Astion the Monk, who were martyrized for Christ at Halmyris (today's Dunavăţ), and ancient Greek city situated on the southern branch of the Danube, "on a day of 8th of July", during the persecution inflicted by Emperor Diocletian. In this document it is precisely affirmed that "His Eminence Evangelicus was Bishop and the Chief Priest of the holy churches of God form this province", namely from Scythia Minor (Dobrogea).

In the martyrdom act it is said that the parents of the Saint Martyr Astion, originating from Asia Minor, they came to Tomis in searching for their son, and they were converted to Christianity by priest Bonosus and then baptized by Bishop Evangelicus at Halmyris, on the 15th day since the martyrdom of the Saints Epictetus and Astion.

It is believed that himself Bishop Evangelicus received the crown of the martyrdom by the same emperor, due to his great love and zeal he had towards Christ.

[4] Fr. Prof. I. Rănmureanu, Eusebius of Caesarea, *Churchly History*, P.S.B. no. 13, 1987, 1988; *The Martyr Acts*, 1982, pp. 329-331; Fr. I. Rănmureanu, *Saints and Martyrs at Tomis / Constanţa*, 1974, no. 708, pp. 975-980; *Saint Basil the Great*, Bucharest, 1979; *From Danube to The Black Sea*, historical witnesses and monuments of Christian art, Publishing House of the Archbishopric of the Tomis and of the Lower Danube, 1977, pp. 28-29ş Fr. Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, 1980, pp. 74-81; Fr. Prof. I. G. Coman, *Churchly Writers from the Ancient-Romanian Epoque*, 1979. These are the main sources for the content of the present book related to the Centuries III-X.

THE HOLY MARTYRS EPICTETUS THE PRIEST AND ASTION THE MONK († 290)[5]

These two holy martyrs originated from Asia Minor, probably from a city from Phrygia. Epictetus was born to Christian parents and he studied from a young age, being very zealous in knowing the Holy Gospel. Then, for he wanted to serve Christ for the whole his life, he left his parents' house and he probably became a monk in one of the Phrygia's monasteries.

For his holiness the Blessed Epictetus was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood and he became a tireless preacher of the Gospel of Christ in his country, and he was converting to Christianity and he baptized in the name of the All-Holy Trinity many of the Phrygians. Among those converted by Epictetus there was a chosen young man called Astion, the son of a magistrate called Alexander. Following his teacher and spiritual father, the Blessed Astion took upon himself the good yoke of Christ, and he became a monk, probably in the same monastery, as the martyrdom acts witness it.

Because of Diocletian's persecution (284-305) around the year 290, the Blessed Epictetus the Priest and Astion the Monk left their country and, for they were zealous in serving Christ, they settled down in Scythia Minor (Dobrogea), in the City of Halmyris (Almiridensis) also called as Salmorus, situated on the southern branch of River Danube. Here they were preaching with much courage the Gospel of Christ, converting to Christianity a great number of pagans.

Hearing that, governor Latronianus ordered they to be imprisoned, at Halmyris, and he ordered they to be awfully tortured in order they to reject Christ. Because of seeing their manhood and the strength of their faith, the governor ordered they to be beheaded under the supervision of Vigilantius, one of the judges of the two martyrs. The martyrdom of the Saints Epictetus and Astion took place at Halmyris, on 8t of July, a day that become the day of their remembrance in the entire Christian Church. In "Acta Sanctorum Julii", t. II (29), Parisiis et Romae, 1867, pp. 540-551, as also in the other martyrdom acts they are called as "De Sanctis Epicteto presbytero et Astione monacho martyribus Almiridensibus (Halmyris) in Scythia".

The parents of the young Martyr Astion, Alexander and Marcelina, departing for the search of their son, they reached Halmyris. Here, they heard about the martyrdom of their son, Saint Astion, and they accepted to be converted to the faith into the true God, by priest Bonosus, and they were baptized by Bishop Evangelicus of Tomis, on the 14th day since the martyrdom of the Saints Epictetus and Astion took place.

[5] Fr. Prof. I. Rănmureanu, *Martyrdom Acts*, 1982, pp. 330-331; Fr. Prof. I. Rănmureanu, in "BOR" (1974), no. 7-8, pp. 975-980; *From Danube River to the Black Sea*, 1977, pp. 47-48.

SAINT SANCTIFIED MARTYR EPHRAIM
Bishop of Tomis
(Century IV)[6]

The second bishop known of the Tomis Eparchy who occupied the throne of shepherd of Pontic Dacia, and who was attested by the Greek and Latin Synaxaria, was the holy sanctified martyr Ephaem. He was born in the south of the River Danube, to Christian parents, who raise him since his early age in the fear of God. He went to worship the Holy Places, he remained there, and he reached to be a priest and a servant at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where the religious services were held, beside the Greek, Latin, and Syrian languages, also in the Thracian and Bessi languages.

Then he reached to be disciple of Patriarch Hermon of Jerusalem (300-314), and he was prepared since his youth to preach the Gospel of Christ to the "barbarian" peoples from the River Danube's mouths and from around Pontus Euxinus (at the Black Sea). At the beginning of the Century IV, he was sent by Patriarch Hermon to shepherd the Dacian-Roman believers from the Bishopric of Tomis, and so he converted to Christianity numerous Dacian-Romans, Goths, and Scythes. He also paid the ransom for numerous slaves who were condemned to death, and then he Christianized them. During the shepherding of this blessed bishop were martyrized for their faith into Christ dozens of Dacian-Roman Christians, Scythians, Bessi, Thracians, Greeks, and Cappadocians exiled to the Pontic Dacia, whose holy relics were bought by Bishop Ephraem, and buried them in secret places, and he built upon them wooded or made in stone churches and he appointed priests to officiate there, during night, the Holy Liturgy.

During the bis persecution inflicted by Diocletian between the years 304-305, the Blessed Bishop Ephraem was caught, imprisoned, and awfully tormented at Cherson (Crimea), because they wanted him to reject the true God and to worship the idols, but, he confessed that he was prepared for yielding his life for Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, so that he was beheaded in the year 304, and he is remembered on 7th of March.

In Synaxarum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae, col. 517, at 7th of March when Saint Martyr and Bishop Ephraem is celebrated, there are mentioned the followings: "7th of March. During the reigning of Diocletian, Hermon, the Bishop of Jerusalem sent as Bishops: Ephraem in Scythia, and Basil at Cherson". Though there are opinions that Ephraem was sent to Scythia Major, and not to Tomis in Scythia Minor, we believe that there were two Bishops bearing the same name, who are honored by the Church one of them on the 6th of March and another on the 7th of March, and that Bishop Ephraem was exiled for his faith and decapitated probably in the Cherson City from Pontus.

[6] Fr. Prof. I Rănmureanu, *Saints and Martyrs at Tomis – Constanța*, in "B.O.R.", 1974, no. 7-8, pp. 980-981; *From River Danube to the Black Sea*, pp. 29, 39.

HOLY MARTYRS TIT AND GORDIAN
Bishops of Tomis
(Century IV)[7]

These two bishops from Tomis probably originated in Cappadocia (Asia Minor), shepherding the flock of Christ from the Pontius Dacia (Dobrogea) during the first two decades of the Century IV, until the last big persecution perpetrated by Licinius between the years 320-323.

After the martyrdom death of Bishop Ephraem, there followed on the episcopal throne of Tomis Bishop Tit (Titus, Filius) who preached and defended the Orthodox faith in Pontius Dacia for more than ten years, catechizing and baptizing numerous Dacians-Romans and especially "barbarians": Goths, Huns, and Bessi, who were inhabiting the territories between the River Danube and the Black Sea.

Bishop Tit was protector and spiritual father to many autochthonous holy martyrs also from the entire Roman Empire, exiled to the Rive Danube's mouths, and then martyrized here by emperors: Diocletian, Galerius, and Licinius, until the year 323. Being denounced to emperor Licinius, the Blessed Bishop Tit was caught, tormented, and drown in the Black Sea, on 3rd of January, when he is mentioned in the Church. His holy relics were taken and buried by his disciples at Tomis. A fragment of funeral stone has been recently discovered at Constanţa (Tomis), which is believed as belonging to Bishop Tit (Titus, Filius), for it is written on that funeral stone: "Here rests the Martyr of Christ and the Bishop…".

Following on the throne from Tomis, Bishop Gordian continued with even greater zeal and courage the apostolic work of conversion, catechization, and baptizing the Dacians-Romans from Pontic Dacia and from Gothia (part of Dacia situated at north of River Danube). Hearing that, the tyrant emperor Licinius threw him in prison, and during the bloody persecutions perpetrated at the mouths of the River Danube during the years 320-323, he was beheaded "o 15th of September", together with another five martyrs: Macrobius, Helia, Zotic, Lucian, and Valerian. The Greek Synaxaria and the Romanian books for religious service mention Saint Martyr Gordian on 13th of September, and the Roman martyrdom acts (Acta Sanctorum) mention him together with Macrobius and Valerian, on 15th of September, calling Saint Gordian as "bishop".

[7] Fr. Prof. I Rănmureanu, *From River Danube to the Black Sea*, pp. 29, 36; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, p. 77.

SAINT MARTYRS ZOTIC, ATAL, CAMASIUS, PHILIP, AND OTHER 31 MARTYRS FROM NICULIȚEL
(Century IV – 4th of June)[8]

The entire Scythia Minos, namely the today's Dobrogea, two millennia ago was part of the Roman Empire, and it was destined, during the big Antichristian persecutions from the centuries I-IV A.D., to exile and to martyrize the Christians who refused to worship the pagan idols and to bring sacrifices to those idols. These territory from the north-east periphery of the Roman Empire, placed between River Danube and the Black Sea, especially in the Danube Delta and the ancient forests from Măcin, Isaccea, Niculițel, and Babadag, as also in the southern area of Dobrogea, between Cernavodă, Adamclisi, Mangalia, and Constanța (Tomis), were the most appropriate on this purpose.

Among the ten Roman persecutions perpetrated between the years 64 and 324, which filled up the heavens with saints and which sanctified the land with the blood of over ten million of martyrs, three of them were the bloodiest: the persecution perpetrated by Decius (249-251), by Diocletian and by Maximilian (284-305), and by Licinius (308-324), in East, and which produced the most martyrs. During these persecutions were exiled in Scythia Minor thousands of Christians, soldiers, clerks, clerics, Roman citizens of all social statutes and conditions.

Some of them starved and froze to death, or because they were beaten, torments which they manly endured as holy confessors of the Holy Gospel. Some of them succeeded to return to their countries after the exile punishment came to an end, or after the persecutors emperors and governors died. And others, maybe hundreds of them, by being stronger in their faith and more zealous for Christ, they were tormented and then martyrized here, between River Danube and the Black Sea, by decapitation. Their bodied which became holy relics, they were hastily taken by Christians and buried in a provisory manner, in secret places known only by Christians. At night, the Christians went to where the martyrs' toms were and they incensed them and they prayed there and they lit up candles there. They secretly preserved their piety for the martyrs' holy relics and they wrote short biographies mentioning the life and the suffering of the holy martyrs. So were born the martyrdom acts, and the martyrs entered the memory of the Christians, the cult of the Church of Christ, and the Synaxaria.

So were saved from being forgotten tens of thousands of martyrs form the Roman Empire, and over a hundred of them from Dobrogea. Later on, when the fire of the foreign persecutions got quenched, and the peace was made again in the empire, the Christians got out from forests and from the secret tombs the relics of the martyrs and they placed those relics in crypts, specially built for them called *martyrions*, and over those they built churches (basilicas)

[8] *Romanian Saints and Defenders of the Ancestral Law*, 1987, p. 173.

in stone and bricks, whose numerous ruins can be seen today all over Dobrogea. Some of those martyrions (crypts for martyrs) from the first Christian centuries got ruined in time. Other were destroyed and defiled by barbarian peoples, who were constantly invading the Christian countries. Others remained hidden in the soil, because of the worthlessness of the Christians, as some pearls of great value.

By the plan of God, in the year 1971, in September, the creek of Niculiţel Village from Tulcea Country, followed the village and the raging waters unveiled under the road crossing through the middle of the village, the oldest and the best preserved martyrion from the entire Balkan Peninsula, and one among the rarest and most precious from the entire world. The martyr crypt from Niculiţel, build in bricks, having as dimensions 3,70 x 3,50 x 2,30, it is divided in two small multi-storied chambers. In the upper chamber were found four whole relics of martyrs, placed in a common wooden coffin, according to the known Orthodox religion, having their hands crossed upon their chests and oriented with their heard towards west. All the martyrs had their heads beheaded, three of the heads being placed where they should be while the fourth head was placed on the martyr's chest. On the left wall next to the entrance is carved in mortar, in Greek, the inscription: "The Martyrs of Christ", and on the right wall it is written: "Martyrs Zoticos, Attalos, Camasius, Philipos", having above the monogram cross.

In the lower chamber, at its turn divided in small sections, there were found almost a hundred pieces of holy bones which belonged to unknown martyrs who, probably, they suffered together with the other four mentioned martyrs, in the Roman locality that was nearby, called Noviodunum, the today's Isaccea. On a limestone slab it is written this small inscription: "Here and there (are) the blood (the strength) of the martyrs"

Above the martyrdom crypt from Niculiţel, there was built quite a large basilica in stone and bricks, which served, probably, as cultic place of an ancient monastery, during the Centuries IV-VII. In the year 602, due to the invasion of the Slavs and of the Bulgarians, which traversed Dobrogea towards the south of the River Danube, the majority of the basilicas and of the Christian centers organized in Pontic Dacia were devastated and left in ruins.

The holy martyrs from Niculiţel: Zotic, Atal, Camasius, and Philip, together with the other 31 martyrs whose names are known and were Greeks, Romans, Thracians, Dacians, and Cappadocians, they who suffered the beheading for Christ, either during the persecution perpetrated by Diocletian during the years 303-304, or during the last bloody persecution from the time of emperor Licinius, between the years 319-324.

After the holy relics were placed, in a provisory manner, in simple and discrete tombs, because of fearing the Roman soldiers, under the reigning of Holy Emperor Constantine the Great, after the year 324, when the capital city of the empire was moved to Constantinople, the Christians from Scythia Minor (Dobrogea), helped by the bishops from Tomis, they built a new crypt in

Niculiţel commune and they raised a big church above it where they definitively placed the holy relics of the mentioned martyrs.

God blessed thus our ancestral land with numerous Christian martyrs, ever since the first Christian centuries and up to these days. Our Savior unveiled to us the whole holy relics of four martyrs who sanctified the land of our nation with their sacrifice and blood. The sacrifice of the Martyrs Zotic, Atal, Camasius, and Philip, together with the other 31 martyrs from Isaccea – Niculiţel, it is one of the greatest sacrifices for Christ from our country. There could be only the sacrifice of our Martyr Voivode Constantin Brâncoveanu together with his four sons can match the martyrdom of the holy martyrs from Niculiţel.

The discovery of the four whole holy relics, one of the oldest and best-preserved Christian relics from the world, it constituted a wonder of God done to us and it is a sign of the mercy of the Heavenly Father upon the Romanian people that is so faithful and so harshly tried. Theya re a proof that our Savior still loves us, that he hasn't forsake us because of our sins and that He calls us too, by the prayers of the holy martyrs, to repentance, to humbleness, to faith, and to a as clean as possible Christian life, all the way up to the supreme sacrifice for the love of Christ, knowing that there is not salvation without sacrifice.

Since the autumn of the year 1971, the holy relics of the four martyrs from Niculiţel have been placed in the church of the Cocoş Monastery, in order the believers to have access to worship them. Their holy bodies sanctify our country and our hearts, and they, together with the angels and with all the saints, they ceaselessly extoll in heavens the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and they are praying for the world. Their remembrance is done on 4th of July.

Holy Martyrs, who suffered and get crowned, pray to the Lord so He may save our souls!

AN UNKNOWN BISHOP
Of Tomis (Century IV)[9]

Under the rule of Saint Emperor Constantine the Great, the process of Christianization in Pontic Dacia (Dobrogea) and in the main Dacia, which form the present Carpathian-Danubian Romana space, it took place openly, without any resistance from interior, and without no hindrance form exterior. On the throne of the Tomis Bishopric, instead of martyr bishops, there were theologian and apologist bishops, profoundly knowers of the Holy Scripture, capable of

[9] Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantin*, III, p. 7; Fr. Prof. Rămureanu, *Holy Martyrs at Tomis – Constanţa*, in the Review B.O.R., 1974, no. 7-8, p. 985; *From Tiver Danube to the Black Sea*, pp. 9-16, 29; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, p. 133.

defending the Orthodox faith into Jesus Christ, both with the spoken and written word, as also with the example of their life.

The name of the Bishop of Tomis from the time of Saint Constantine the Great (after the year 323) it is unfortunately unknown to us. Out of the witnesses had by us, we can deduce that he was a great defender of the Orthodoxy, one appreciated by emperor and by numerous hierarchs living at that time. Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea in his work *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine*, when mentioning the bishops present at the great Synod from Nicaea (325), in addition to two bishops from Dacia, from "Bosphorus" and Theophilus of Greece, he affirmed that "neither the Scythian was missing from that group. And that was, of course. The bishop of Tomis who took an active part to the First Ecumenical Synod and who strongly fought against the heresy of Arie, asking for his condemnation.

This bishop of Tomis undertook an intense missionary activity in Pontic Dacia for converting to Christianity ands for defending the right-faith in his eparchy, against the heresy of Aries. He built, of course, basilicas in the main cities, as: Tomis (Constanţa), Histria (Istria), Calatis (Mangalia), Axiolopolis (Cernavodă), Adamclisi, Halmyris, Niculiţel, and Noviodum (Isaccea), and he gave amplitude to the monastic life in his eparchy. At the same time, it came to existence the ascetic life in caves and in the ancient forests from Dobrogea's plateau and in the Măcin Mountains, where, later on, there were formed the great Dacian-Roman theologians, as: John Cassian, Dionysus the Little, and John Maxentius, renown in the whole Roman Empire, or those famous "Scythes monks" know all the way up to Rome and in the eparchies of Africa.

During that flourishing epoque, the bishop of Tomis took a special care of the holy relics of the saints killed in Pontic Dacia, for their love for Christ. He gathered some of those holy relics in martyrions, above which he built round churches, or true basilicas, and he appointed for the remembrance services. Such a martyrs' crypt, probably built at his command, it is also that from Niculiţel, discovered in the year 1971, unique in Romania, were there were found the holy relics of the martyrs: Zotic, Atal, Camasie, and Philip, nowadays preserved at Cocoş-Monastery from Tulcea.

THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR SAVA
(† 13th of April 372)[10]

The oldest and most honored holy martyr, known and martyrized on the land of our country in the IV Century, he is Saint Great Martyr Sava, also

[10] Fr. Prof. I. Rămureanu, *The Martyrs Acts*, 1982, pp. 311-324; Fr. Prof. I. Rămureanu, "Saint Sava the Great and the Christians from Scythia Minor and from the Northern-Danubian Dacia", in the volume *Saint Basil the Great*, Bucharest, 1979, pp. 385-389; *Hagiographic Dictionary*, pp. 740-742; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, pp. 98-102; Fr. Prof. I. G. Coman, "The Source of the Romanian Orthodoxy", in the Review *The Orthodoxy*, 3/1981, p. 340, *Romanian Saints*…, p. 194.

known as “the Goth” (the Getae-Dacian), as well as “the Roman”. This martyr was “Goth by nationality and he lived in Gothia”, as it is said in his martyr act, in a village on the Valley of Buzău River, born for chosen Christian parents who gave him an exquisite education.

The Blessed Sava was raised from an early age in prayer and in virginity, and he reached in his youth to be churchly singer to the church where was the priest Sansala serving, his good shepherd and spiritual father. It is believed that the young Sava became a monk, probably in the monastic community form the Buzău Mountains, a monastic community founded around the middle of the IV Century by monks coming from the Tomis Eparchy, because of fearing the “barbarians” who were migrating through Dobrogea towards the West of Europe. Both priest Sansala and the Blessed Sava were missionary monks in the Buzău County, where there probably was also a “bishopric, and they were converting numerous Dacian-Romans, Goths, and “barbarians” who were idols worshippers”.

Between the years 370-372, the Goths’ King Athanaric, established in the Northern-Danubian Dacia, perpetrated a harsh persecution against the Roman Emperor Valens’ subjects, whom he was at war with. Then, many Christians were arrested, beaten, drown, burn alive, in the Trajan Dacia. Other, fearing, they sought for refuge at the South of Danube, in Moesia and in the Pontic Dacia.

In the martyr’s act of Saint Great Martyr Sava, it is written that in the spring of the year 372, on the third day after Easter, at night, the soldiers of Athanaric, under the lead of a clerk, Atarid, they arrested both priest Sansala and the Blessed Sava, and they tied them up and they beaten them, inflicting them many wound on their bodies, in order to force them to bring sacrifices to the idols and to eat those offerings. Because Saint Sava confronted them manly, they condemned him to death by drowning. They tied a heavy wood on his neck and they threw him in Buzău River (Mousaios). The soldiers wanted to set him free, but he told them: accomplish the order given to you. I am seeing beyond this river something that you cannot see. I see the ones waiting for my soul to bring my soul in the dwelling place of the glory of God…”.

So passed Saint Sava away from this life, by yielding his blessed soul in the hands of Christ. His martyrdom took place on 12th of April 372, on the fifth day after the Holy Easter, when he was 38 years old. His holy relics were taken by Christians and by priest Sansala and hidden away. Then, because of fearing the Goths, “they moved his holy relics from the barbarian country into Romania”, namely into the Roman Empire, to the Bishop Ascholius of Thessaloniki, who originated from Cappadocia.

Around the year 373-374, at the request of Saint Basil the Great addressed to the ruler of the Scythia Minor, Iunius Soranus, who was a Cappadocian at his turn, and who was a relative of his, “to send him holy relics of saints”, the presbyters from Dacia sent him the holy relics of Saint Martyrs Sava to Caesarea of Cappadocia, accompanied by a long and beautiful letter. That letter, composed by a literate priest from Dacia, or maybe even by Saint

Vetranion from Tomis, it is entitled *Epistle of the Church of God from Gothia* (Dacia), *towards the Church of God that is in Cappadocia and towards all the local Churches of the Holy Universal Church*. So, that letter was addressed to all the local churches, not only to that from Cappadocia, being give to it an ecumenical, universal character, in the attempt to make known to all Christians that in the Carpathian Dacia as well, there was flowing martyrs blood for the Gospel of Christ. The letter was written in Greek and it is the first work known up to these days, as being written on the territory of our country.

The great hierarch of Caesarea of Cappadocia, answered that letter by addressing to Bishop Ascholius of Thessaloniki two thank letters (the Epistles no. 164 and 165), by which he called Saint Sava "*Athlete of Christ*", *"a martyr of the truth who gained the crown of the righteousness"*[11]. And then ha added: "*We have welcomed him with great joy and we have extolled God*". And to the mentioned bishop Saint Basil wrote: "You have honored the land of your country (Cappadocia) with a martyr who recently flourished on barbarian land" (Gothia), a land that neighbors your land".

The remembrance of Saint Great Martyr Sava is done on 12th of April in all Christian churches from East and from West, and especially in the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Saint Great Martyr Sava, pray God for us!

[11] Epistle no. 165.

Saints and Pious Fathers from the Centuries III-VI

Saint Martyr Nicetas (the Roman)
(† 372)[12]

The second martyrs called Nicetas, namely the "Victorious", who suffered hir martyrdom from Goths in the year 372, on the land of our country, after Saint Great Martyr Sava, it was Saint Great Martyr Nicetas, sometimes called also the Roman, while some other times he is called as "the Dacian-Roman". This venerable martyr was born to Greek parents who had the same motherland as Saint Apostle Paul deed, namely Cilicia in Asia Minor. His parents were brought by Goths and colonized Dacia after the year 258.

The blessed Nicetas was born in a village from the Danube's plain (it could be Argeş Valley), at the beginning of the IV Century, and he learnt the mysteries of the faith from Bishop Theophilus of Scythia and Gothia (Dacia). He became a monk at one of the monasteries situated at sought of Danube, or maybe in the Buzău Mountains, where there was a known small monastic settlement. The young soldier of Christ, Nicetas, he was ordained as priest by the same Theophilus, and she reached to be missionary presbyter through villages, catechizing and baptizing many Dacians-Romans and Goths.

Because of seeing his faith and his victory upon passions, and because it had been started the big persecution of Athanaric against the Christians, in the year 372, the Goths chiefs' soldiers arrested the blessed Nicetas in the church, while he was officiating the religious service, and he was burnt alive in front of the holy alter, according to the Goths' custom, on the day of 5th of September. His guilt was that of urging the Christians not to bring sacrifices to a Goths' idol, which the Goths were carrying around through villages, in a carriage.

His holy relics, as many as remained after his body had been burnt, they were gathered by Christians and honored with a great piety. And in the year 451, his holy relics were brought to his ancestral motherland, Cilicia, and placed in a church from the City of Mopsuestia, being him honored as a "great martyr" in the whole Chriatian Church.

PRIEST SANSALA
(Century IV)[13]

Presbyter Sansala was a famous Goth priest from the Century IV, known on the territory of the Carpathian Dacia. He is mentioned in the martyr act of Saint Great Martyr Sava.

Priest Sansala was probably born in the Buzu County, to Goths parents who were converted to Christianity by Cappadocian missionaries or "Scythians" who came from Pontic Dacia. From his youth, being found worthy of the gift of

[12] *The Menaion* of September in 15 days; *The Martyrs Acts*, 1982, pp. 312-313; *The Hagiographic Dictionary*, p. 609; *The History of the Romanian Church*, vol. I, p. 99.
[13] Fr. Prof. I. Rămureanu, *The Martyrs Acts*, 1982, pp. 312-313.

the priesthood, he reached to be shepherd and servant of the Gospel of Christ, in a village from the Buzău Valley (Mousaios), and he made many Christians out of pagans, especially among Goths. His closest disciple, and spiritual, son was a young man of Cappadocian origine, called Sava, who was helping him to the religious serviced held in the church, by singing psalms.

About Priest Sansala, about his piousness, his zeal, and his courage which he was confessing Christ with, all over the Buzău county, we are told in details in the "Letter of the Church of God from Gothia (Dacia), towards the Church of God from Cappadocia and towards all the local Churches of the Holy Universal Church". This epistle accompanied the holy relics of Saint Great Martyr Sava from Dacia to Cappadocia, which were sent there at the request of Saint Basil the Great, around the years 373-374.

During the persecution perpetrated by the Goth King Athanaric, in the year 372, there were arrested and tortured for Christ both Priest Sansala and the singer of his church, Sava. Then, the priest was set free, and Sava was drowned in the River Buzău's waters, on 12th of April 372. His spiritual father took his holy relics and, at the advice of the presbyters from Dacia, he sent his relics, secretly, to Ascholius, in the south of Danube, and from there in Cappadocia.

Serving the Church of Christ for many years after that and converting to Christianity many Dacians-Romans and Goths, the blessed priest Sansala was moved to the eternal life, around the end of the Century IV.

PIOUS EUTYCHUS
(Century IV)

About the name, the life, and the zeal of the pious presbyter Eutychus for the love for Christ, as also about his evangelical mission in the Carpathian-Danubian Dacia, we are told in brief by Saint Basil the Great, in his Epistle no. 164. From what Saint Basil wrote, we can understand that Priest Eutychus was a Cappadocian from Caesarea City, contemporary to Saint Basil the Great, whom he was well known to. He was urged by Saint Basil the Great to come to Carpathian Dacia and to confess Christ to pagans. Here Eutychus became a monk and missionary priest, and then he reached to be probably a bishop in the Buzău-Vrancea Country, where he undertook an intense activity of catechization, conversion, and baptizing or numerous Getae-Dacian-Romans, Goths, and other "barbarian" nations, who were migrating through the Dacia's center. After the year 348, Bishop Ulfilas withdrew himself to the south of Danube, because of the persecution started by King Athanaric, the Blessed Eutychus became the most zealous preacher of the Gospel of Christ in Dacia's center, in the Century IV.

Hearing about that, Saint Basil the Great praised him for his successes among "barbarians", whom he was appeasing by the power of the Holy Ghost through working his charismas. The Blessed Eutychus was truly great and he

was found worthy by God of the gift of working wonders and of healing the illnesses. Saint Basil said about Eutychus the followings: "For the fact that you mentioned also the Blessed Eutychus and you have extolled our motherland (Caesarea of Cappadocia) as one who produced the seeds of the faith, you have gladdened us with the memory of the past things but you have saddened us with the seeing of the present things. This is because none among our people resembled to Eutychus. We are so far from appeasing the barbarians with the power of the Holy Ghost and from working His wonders, so that even those who are gentle (among them) ger worser because of the multitude of our sins. We blame on ourselves on our sins also the big extending of the heretics' rule. This is because almost no part of this area escaped the uprising of the heresy…".

So was praised Eutychus by the Great Hierarch. His name stays next to that of Priest Sansala, and next to the names of the Holy Martyrs Nicetas and Sava, as also next to the name of many monks, missionary priests and bishops, most of them originating from Cappadocia, and who confessed Christ and who sow the Orthodox faith in the Carpathian-Danubian Dacia, and whose names and deeds are written in heavens.

SAINT HIERARCH BRETANION (VETRANION)
Bishop of Tomis
(Century IV)[14]

This venerable Bishop of Tomis originated form Cappadocia. He occupied the throne of the Bishopric of Tomis around the year 360, and he proved himself to be a devoted shepherd of the flock of Christ, and a zealous defender of the Christian Orthodox faith. He lives an ascetic life of holiness and he steadfastly opposed the Arianism from entering the borders of his eparchy, which was stretched from Danube River to the Black Sea.

About this holy Bishop wrote two famous Church writers – Sozomen and Theodoret of Cyr. Thus, Sozomen speaks about the visit undertaken by Emperor Valens (364-378) to Tomis, in the year 369, when he was returning from an expedition against the Goths. The author tells us in his "Churchly History" that the emperor entered the Episcopal Church and he asked the bishop to enter the communion with the Arians whom he was sympathetic to, and to officiate together with them. The great Bishop defended the right-faith and he "spoke to the emperor daringly about the decisions made by the 318 Holy Fathers at the I Synod from Nicaea (325) against Aries, which he couldn't transgress". Then the god shepherd of the flock of Christ withdrew with his followers to another church from Tomis, letting the emperor alone. The emperor was infuriated and attempted to exile the bishop, but he immediately

[14] *From Danube River to the Black Sea*, pp. 29, 50-51; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, pp. 133-134; Fr. Prof. I. Rămuneanu, *Saints and Martyrs at Tomis – Constanta*, in B.O.R., year XCII, no. 7-8, pp. 1001-1006; Fr. Prof. I. Rămuneanu, *The Martyrs Acts*, 1982, pp. 335-341.

changed his mind because of fearing the possible uprising of the "Scythians" from Pontic Dacia.

The same rejection was to be faced by Valens, a few years later, in Caesarea of Cappadocia, from Saint Basil the Great († 379) who was a good friend and probably spiritual father to Saint Bretanion.

Sozomen ended his recount with the following words: "Lo how Bretanion stood against emperor's zeal, he being, otherwise, a skillful man and famous for his virtuous life, as the Scythians themselves confess".

Theodoret, Bishop of Cyr, he too said that: "And Bretanion, being adorned with all kinds of virtues, and being him entrusted with the task of being hierarch over the cities from all over Scythia (Pontic Dacia), he made his cogitation fiery with zeal and he stood against to the corruption of the teachings of the right-faith and to the lawlessness perpetrated by Emperor Valens against the right-worshippers…".

The blessed Bishop Bretanion much encouraged the ascetic life and the ascesis of the hermits who lived in caves and in cave-churches, according to the custom of the hermits from Cappadocia. He probably led John Cassian and his friend Gherman towards the monastic ascesis, when they where children, and he probably erected a basilica upon the crypt of the four martyrs from Niculiţel, whose ruins, together with the martyrion, were discovered in the year 1971. During his shepherding, there were in the Tomis Eparchy few monastic famous settlements, with scries and theologians.

Saint Bretanion is reckoned by some theologians as being the author of the "Letter of the Church of Gothia (Trajan Dacia) towards the Church from Cappadocia…", which accompanied the holy relics of the Saint Sava the Goth, martyrized on 12th of April 372, relics asked for by Saint Basil the Great in his origin country. Bishop Bretanion contributed, together with the governor of the Pontic Dacia, Iunius Soranus, to the transport of the holy relics of Saint Great Martyrs Sava the Goth to Caesarea of Cappadocia".

A little time before the year 381, the Holy Bishop Bretanion yielded his soul in the hand of God and he is honored by the Orthodox Church as Saint, on 25th of January.

BISHOP GERONTIUS
(Terentius)
Of Tomis
(ca. 380-390)[15]

After Saint Bretanion, the throne of the Tomis Bishopric was occupied by Bishop Gerontius, another hierarch devoted to Christ, of the same fame and holiness as his predecessor. The acts of the Ecumenical Synod II (381), and the

[15] Fr. Prof. I. Rămuneanu, "The Second Ecumenical Synod from Constantinople", in *The Orthodoxy*, 1981, no. 3, pp. 285-336; *From the River Danube to the Black Sea*, p. 29; *The History of the Romanian Church*, vol. I, p. 134.

churchly writer Sozomen, attest that Bishop Gerontius participated to that Ecumenical Synod on behalf of the Tomis Bishopric, and so he signed the acts of the synod to be condemned the heretic teaching of Macedonius. The same Sozomen tells us that on 31st of July 381, after the Synod, emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395) empowered Bishop Getontius "to watch at keeping clean the Orthodoxy in the cities from Scythia Minor".

This blessed follower of the Holy Apostles was known to Saint Gregory of Nazianzus and to many other famous hierarchs living in the empire. He continued building new basilicas and he maintained the monastic life from Pontic Dacia on a high level of ascetic living, being in tight connection with the Cappadocia, Palestinian, and Egyptian monasticism, where there were also Dacian-Roman monks living in ascesis.

So, by ending well the trip of this life, he was moved in peace to the heavenly dwelling places, being counted in the group of the holy hierarchs of Christ.

SAINT HIERARCH THEOTIMUS I – THE "HUSBAND"
Bishop of Tomis
(Centuries IV-V)[16]

The Blessed Bishop Theotimus I was a Dacian-Roman, autochthonous from Pontic Dacia. He is reckoned as the first teacher and spiritual father of the Saints John Casian and Gherman, whom he was contemporary to, and whom he formed from their young age in the same monastery from "the lands of Cassian-like Monks and of the Caves". This monastery, who produced writer monks improved in their deeds, it truly was a hearth of holiness, of culture, and of profound theology from the Tomis Eparchy, certified by the high spiritual, theological, and literary level reached by the three Dacian-Roman Saints, who lived at the same time: John Cassian, Gherman, and Theotimus I who was surnamed, by the paleo-Christian historians as "The Scythian" and "The Philosopher".

This bishop ascended on the throne of the Tomis Eparchy around the year 385, after the moving from this life of Bishop Gerontius. As Bishop of Tomis, he is mentioned for the first time in the year 392, by the Blesse Jerome († 421), in his famous work "De viris Illustribus" (About Illustrious Men), a book that mentions him as illustrious shepherd, having a great love for God and for people, a highly educated theologian and a talented and riteless writer. It is affirmed that "he wrote short treaties (books) as dialogues, in the style of "a great eloquence", proving his vast culture in the ancient, Greek and Latin rhetorics and philosophy. Then, the Blessed Jerome ends his works about Theotimus thus: "I hear that he writes other works too".

[16] Fr. Prof. I. Rămuneanu, *The Martyrs Acts*, 1982, pp. 342-351; *From River Danube to the Black Sea*, pp. 50-51; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, pp. 134-135; *Romanian Saints*…, p. 166.

The few fragments from the works of Theotimus are preserved in the work of Saint John Damascene († 749) *Holy Parallels*, from which one can find out that "he wrote homilies to some of the Gospel's texts". Historian Sozomen writes about Bishop Theotimus that he was a Scythian (Dacian-Roman), that he "lived a modest living", and he was a thaumaturge (healer of illnesses). And Socrates, another paleo-Christian historian says that the Blessed Bishop Theotimus was "known by all – emperors, bishops, believers, and "barbarians" – for his life's piousness and correctitude. For his patristic writings, Saint Theotimus I is reckoned the "creator of the Romanian Philokalia". He was influenced, of course, in this thinking by Saint John Chrysostom and by the Cappadocian Fathers. Theotimus I, he spoke very nicely, about the quietude of the mind and of the heart.

Under the shepherding of Theotimus I, the monasteries and the hermitages from Dobrogea of the Century IV, renown by ascesis and hesychia (quietude), they experienced a golden age, becoming in the centuries V-VI known in the entire empire due to the famous "Scythian monks", spread both at North of Danube River all the way up to Carpathian Mopuntains, as also at south, all the way to Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome, and Africa. The basilicas erected by him, whose ruins can be seen today, they were big and ornated with mosaics, and that proves an impressive number of believers they had, as also the beauty of the cult and of the architecture from the Centuries IV-V.

As missionary, Saint Theotimus I, he was equally zealous for Christ as his forerunners were. He suffered much because of the migrating "barbarians", who he was able to appease, with much difficulty, through his charismas, through his prayers, and through the holiness of his life. That's why the pagans called him "the Romans' god".

Saint Theotimus the "Scythian" was well-known to Emperor Arcadius and especially to Saint John Chrysostom, whom he was a devoted friend to. In the year 399, the great patriarch sent to the Blessed Theotimus missionary monks "for the nomad Scythians from Istrum", namely for Huns. In the year 400 Saint Theotimus took part to a local synod in Constantinople, summoned by Saint John Chrysostom against the heretic teaching of Bishop Antoninus of Ephesus. In the year 403 Bishop Theotimus was again in Constantinople, defending the great patriarch and teacher of all world, against the accusations brought him by Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus, and this proved the deep spiritual connection between the ancient-Romanian Bishop Theotimus I and Saint John Chrysostom.

Around the end of the first decade of the Century V, the Blessed Bishop Theotimus left this life in peace, for the heavenly dwelling places. For his clean life, for his missionary work, and for his right-faith which he confessed Christ with, the Orthodox Church passed him into the ranks of the saints, and he is remembered on 20th of April. In *Acta Sanctorum* are said about Saint Theotimus I the followings: "*At Tomis, in Scythia, they do the remembrance of*

Saint Bishop Theotimus (Theotimas) who was honored even by the ungodly barbarians for his holiness and for his wonders".

SAINT JOHN CASSIAN
(ca. 360-435)[17]

This great and famous ascetic, theologian, monasteries organizer, teacher, apologist, and churchly writer of the Church of Christ, who lived between the Centuries IV-V, he was a Dacian-Roman. He was born around the year 360 A.D., in Pontic Dacia (Scythia Minor – today's Dobrogea), namely in the Tomis Eparchy, at 40 km North-West of Constanța City, "within the borders of the Cassian people and of the (district of the) Caves". His parents, pious and wealthy Christians, they provided their son John (Cassian, namely from Cassian people country) a chosen Christian education, and they accustomed him form an early age to the reading of the Holy Scripture and to practicing a high spiritual living, in prayer, in ascesis, in virginity, and in zeal for the godlike things. Being thirsty for learning from books, he was given in his childhood to a school of that time, which were functioning at Tomis, at Histria, at Axiopolis, or at one of the neighboring monasteries. Here he studied the works of the great classics Greek and Roman philosophers, and later on he studied the patristic writings dating from the Centuries II-IV which were circulating in the North-East part of the Roman Empire.

In one of his *Dialogues*, Saint John Cassian tenderly evokes his parental house, the monasteries, and the beauty of his natal places from Pontic Dacia (Dobrogea of the Century IV). Lo what he says: "Towards this Abba Abraham we turned the assault of our thoughts, by openly confessing that we were pushed by the thought of turning back to our province and to see our parents. For we remembered that our parents were endowed with so great faith and piety, it was born to us the desire and the presupposition that they won't impede our plan. We though that we had something to gain out of their zeal, meaning that we no longer had to be preoccupied with procuring the things necessary to the body, nor the food, for they were fulfilling joyfully and plentifully our needs. In addition to that, we nourished our soul with the hope of the vain joys and with the belief that we were to harvest fruits from converting many people, who needed to be guided on the path of salvation by our example and urge. Besides the location of the place, where there was the property inherited by us form our ancestors, it was depicted in front of my imagination's eyes the pleasant charm of that region, which was graciously stretching in the spaces of the loneliness, so that the hiding places of the

[17]

forests not only they could delight a monk, but they were able also to offer a maximum source of food" (*Convoy* 1: 2-3).

According to his own confession, Saint John Cassian "*since our childhood* (a pueritia nostra) *lived among the monks whose advices he hear and whose examples he saw*". In the ancient forests from the middle and from the North of Dobrogea of the Century IV there was a strong monastic center, with several monasteries and with tens, or maybe with hundreds of "Scythian" monks and with hermits loving Christ "among whom there flourished the monastic rule, the habit of living in virginity, and a very severe ascesis… whose way of living is totally worthy of admiration", as Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus (340-403) affirmed in his book "*Against Eighty Heresies*", when referring to the monks from Pontic Dacia.

Seeing the holiness, the zeal for Christ, and the ascesis of the "Scythian" monks from his country, Saint John Cassian decides at an early youth to take upon him the good yoke of Christ, so that he became a monk in one of the monasteries of the Tomis Eparchy, where there was already living in ascesis Saint Gherman, his relative and his friend for his entire life. His good fame, his chose life, his zeal for God, as also his vast culture, they made of the young monk John Cassian a friend of the great bishops of Tomis – the saints Bretanion (in the second half of the Century IV) and Theotimus I the "Scythian" (ca. 392-403).

Wanting to worship the Holy Places, and especially the giver-of-life Tomb of Christ, in the year 380, when he was only twenty years old, the Pious John Cassian left for Jerusalem, together with his sister and with the Pious Gherman, his relative and friend. In Jerusalem, the two monks were accommodated to a monastery from Bethlehem, near to the cave where Christ was born.

After more than five years of bodily and spiritual ascesis in Bethlehem, Saint John Cassian together wit his friend Gherman, they were guided by the gift of the Holy Ghost to visit the monasteries and the hermitages form Egypt, which is the motherland of the Christian monasticism.

For more than seven years, the two Dacian-Roman monks originating from the mouths of the River Danube, they visited the pious monks, abbots, anchorites, and teachers of the Egyptian desert, learning from all of them the craftsmanship of the spiritual ascesis, consummating themselves into holiness, in prayer and in humbleness. Here too, Saint John Cassian started writing his famous literary work in 24 books, called "*Dialogues with the Fathers*" (Collationes), asking for and receiving advices and words of teaching from the great anchorites who were living in ascesis on the River Nile's Valley, in Scetis, Thebe, Nitria's Mountain, in Rait, and on Sinai Mountain. The good soldiers of Christ were tarried from place to place, at one hermit or another, as some bees gathering from each of them the nectar of the wisdom of the Holy Ghost.

After a short return to Bethlehem, the two Dacian-Romanian hermits turned back to Egypt and they tarried there until the year 399. Then, because some unrests occurred in the monasteries from the Nile's Valley, caused by

Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria, Saint Cassian together with his frie3nd Gherman went to Constantinople, to Saint John Chrysostom, whom he heard about and whom he loved so much. The great patriarch and teacher of the whole world, after seeing the holiness of the life of the Pious John Cassian, as also his deep theological culture, he ordained him as deacon and he made him his disciple. Saint John Cassian lived for five years under the guidance of Saint John Chrysostom, learning from him many useful deed and words.

The exile from the patriarchal throne of Saint John Chrysostom, in the year 404, it forced Saint John Cassian to leave for Rome, together with his inseparable friend Gherman, in order to defend Saint John Chrysostom in front of Pope Inocentius I. Then, because of hearing that his good parent and shepherd died in exile, Saint John Cassian got so disgusted of Emperor Arcadius, that he never returned to East, neither in his motherland situated at the mouths of the River Danube, but he definitively settled himself down in the south of Galia, at Marseille. Here he founded two monasteries, one of monks, consecrated to Saint Victor, and another of nuns, according to the model provided by Pious Pachomius and by Saint Basil the Great, organizing thus, the first, the monasticism in the West, according to the monastic rules form the East.

Safter being ordained as priest, and after reaching to be abbot of the two monasteries, Saint John Cassian gathered around him numerous disciples whom he appointed spiritual guides to, rule of ascesis and monastic life as in East, and he dedicated the years of his old age especially to writing. His work, preserved and known up to these days, it comprises three works.

1. *On the Organization of the Congregational Monasteries and on the Healing of the Eight Main Sins*; a work written in the year 420 in twelve books, at the request of Bishop Castor from South of Galia. In the first four books, Saint John Cassian speaks about the clothing of the monks from Palestine and from Egypt, about the prayers and about the psalms sung at night, about the daily religious services. In the other eight books Saint John Cassian speaks about the eight mortal sins, called by him as “thoughts of the evilness”, namely: the belly’s covetousness, the debauchery, the love for money, the anger, the sadness, the laziness (the acedia), the vain-glory, and the pride.

2. *Dialogues with the Fathers* (Collationes Patrum) in twenty-four books or dialogues, which compose the most important literary work remained from Saint John Cassian. This work is divided in three parts. The first part, in ten books, it comprises the first ten dialogues had with the father from the Scetis Wilderness, during his second trip through Egypt (393-399), dedicated to Bishop Leontius, a brother of Bishop castor. The second part comprises seven books, the dialogues no. 11-17, had with the father from Panephisis. The third part, comprising the last seven books, it comprises the dialogues no. 18-24 had with the father from Diolcos Country. This work was written between the years 420-429.

3. *About the Embodiment of the Lord, against Nestorius*, in seven books, also written in the South of Galia, between the years 429-430. This last work of

Saint John Cassian confutes the Nestorian heresy, who didn't want to call Virgin Mary as Birth Giver of God (Theotocos), but only as Birth Giver of Christ (Hristotocos).

In his first two works Saint John Cassian presented to the Wester Christianity, for the first time, the rules of the monastic life from East, casting thus a steadfast bridge between the Christian countries from Orient and Occident. And through his third work, the Dacian-Roman theologian makes know, for the first time in the West, the heretic and anti-Orthodox doctrine of Nestorius. Thus, Saint John Cassian became the first organizer and founder of the monasticism in the Wester Europe, where he made known for the first time the patristic and mystical thinking, as also the spiritual experience of the great Fathers from Egypt, Sinai, and Palestina. In the same time, Saint John Cassian is reckoned also as a great apologist of the apostolic faith and a profound knower of the Orthodox dogmas, fighting with the whole his power against Nestorianism, against Pelagianism, and against the supremacy of the grace.

After a steadfast ascesis for over sixty years in the monastic life, Saint Cassian passed away in peace, at his monastery from Marseille, in the year 435, yielding his soul in the hands of Christ, and leaving behind a few hundreds of disciples. His holy relics are in a subterranean chapel from Saint Victor Monastery, in Marseille, and his head and his right hand are exposed in the church to be worshipped. He was reckoned as a saint while he was still alive. His remembrance is done on 29th of February.

SAINT CASSIAN THE ROMAN
Towards Bishop Castor

ON THE EIGHT THOUGHTS OF THE EVILNESS[18] [19]

After I have composed the word about the rules of the coenobitic communities, this time, also hoping for Your prayers, we have started writing about the eight thoughts of the evilness, namely about the thought of the belly's covetousness, of the debauchery, of the love for money, of the anger, of the sadness, of the idleness, or the vain-glory, and of the pride.

I. About the Restraint of the Belly

Firstly, so, we will talk about the restraint of the belly, which resists to the gorging of the belly; then about the ways of the fasts and about the type and of the quantity of the meals. And these ones we won`t tell them from ourselves, but from the Holy Fathers, from who we have received it. They have

[18] Translated from Greek, by Fr. Prof. Acad. D. Stăniloae, in *The Romanian Philokalia*, vol. I, 1947, pp. 97-123.

[19] We are going to give in the followings the text in the English language as translated by us in our work of translation in English dedicated to the twelve volumes of *The Romanian Philokalia,* between the year 2012-2024. The interested reader can find and freely download the manuscript of our translation from www.academia.edu.

not lived a single canon of fasting, neither a single type of impartation of meals, nor the same measure for everybody; because, not everybody has the same strength, and the same age; and, also, for the weakness of some ones, or of a more delicate habituation of the body. But one thing they have established for anyone: to run away of the gorging and the saturation of the belly. And the daily fasting they have reckoned it to be more useful for cleaning than the one of two or three days, of than the one stretched till an entire week. Because they say: the one who stretches above measure the fasting, he also often above measure uses the food. From this reason it happens that sometimes, by the exceeding of the fasting, the body weakens and makes itself lazier towards the spiritual duties; and other sometimes, through the abundance of food, and makes to be born into the soul careless and drowsiness. The Father have tried also that the eating of the greeneries and of the vegetables it is not suited to everybody, and neither the crumbled bread cannot be used like food by everybody. And the Fathers have said that one eating two pounds of bread he is still hungry, and another one, eating one pound, or six ounces, he is fed. (In this case the ounce it is the Roman ounce: 27 grams and 165 milligrams) So, like I have said before, it was given to everybody only one rule for restraint: that nobody delude himself with the saturation of the belly and to not let himself stolen by the pleasure of the throat. Because not only the difference of the types but also the quantity of the meals, make to be lighten the arrows of the fornication. Because, with any sort of food being filled the belly, gives birth to the seed of the adultery; likewise, not only the fumes of the wine make the mind to get drunk, but also the satiety of water, and also the surplus of any meal makes it drowsy. In Sodom, not the fumes of the wine, or of the diverse meals, had brought the disaster, but the gorging with bread, like the Prophet says[20]. The weakness of the body does not harm the purity of heart, when we give to the body not what the pleasure wants, but what the weakness needs. Let`s use the foods only to survive, not to make ourselves slaves to the impulses of the lust. The receiving of the food with measure and with reckoning, gives the health to the body and does not take from it the holiness.

The rule of the restraint and the canon placed by the Fathers, it is the following: the one who partakes himself of a meal, let him go away from it when he still has lust, and not to wait to be fed. And the Apostle, saying: "(…) make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof", he did not stop the necessary administer for the life, but that care loving of pleasures. Besides, for the perfect cleansing of the soul it is not enough the restraint from the meals, if are not added to it the other virtues. That`s why the humbleness through the obedience with the work, and through the tiredness of the body, bring a lot of

[20] Ezekiel: 16: 49: KJB: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."; ROB: Look what were the lawlessness of Sodom, your sister, and of her daughters: the pride, the gluttony, the gorging of the belly, and the idleness; and the hands of the poor one and of the needy one they do not supported them."

great benefits. The restraint from the love of money leads the soul toward cleansing, when it means not only the lack of money, but also the lack of the lust to have it. The restraint from the anger, from the sadness, from the vain glory and from the pride, it does the cleansing of the soul in its entirety. And the partial cleansing of the soul, namely the one of the righteousness, it is done especially by the restraint and by the fast. Because it is impossible for the one who has saturated his stomach, to be able to fight in his mind with the devil of the fornication. Behold why our first battle must be for the restraint of the stomach and for the obedience of the body, not only through fast, but also through watchfulness, tiredness and readings; the bringing of the heart at the fear of the hell, and at the longing after the kingdom of heavens.

II. About the Devil of the Fornication and of the Bodily Lust

The second battle that we have it is against the devil of the fornication and of the bodily lust. This lust starts to upset the man from the very first age. Great and horrendous war it is this, and asks for a twofold fight. Because this war it is twofold, being both into the body and into the soul. That`s why we must fight the battle from two sides against it. Therefore it is not enough only the bodily fast, for the achievement of the consummated righteousness and of the true cleansing, if you won`t add the crushing of the heart, and the prayer stretched toward God, and the often reading of the Scriptures, and the tiredness, and the manual labor, which barely together can stop the restless impulses of the soul, and to bring it back from the shameless hallucinations. First of all, though, it is useful the humbleness of the soul, without which nobody will be able to win, neither the fornication, nor the other passions. So, from the beginning must be guarded the heart, with all the watchfulness, against the filthy thoughts[21]. Because, from this one proceed, according to the Word of the Lord, evil thoughts, killings, adulteries and fornications, and the other ones. Because the fast was ordered to us not only for the tormenting of the body, but also for the wakefulness of the mind, lest, becoming us darkened by the multitude of the meals, to not be able to guard itself against of the thoughts.

Therefore, it is not ought to be put the entire striving only into the bodily fast, but also in spiritual meditation, without which it is impossible to ascend at the height of the true purity and cleansing. It is appropriated, according to the Word of God let us "clean first that which is within the cup and platter that the outside of them may be clean also"[22]. That`s why, let us strive, as the Apostle says, "to fight ourselves after the law and to take the crown"[23], after we

[21] Proverbs: 1: 23: KJB: "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you"; ROB: "Turn yourselves back again to my reproof and, behold, I`ll poor upon you My ghost, and I`ll herald My words to you."

[22] Matthew: 23: 26: KJB: "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."; ROB: "You, blind Pharisee! Clean first the inside part of the cup and of the plate, to be clean also the one from outside."

[23] II Timothy: 2: 5: KJB: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: // Henceforth

have defeated the unclean spirit of the fornication, relying us not on our power and on our ascesis, but also into the help of Our Master God. Because this devil don`t cease to make war the man, until the man will believe that not through his striving, neither through his tiredness, but through the cover and the help of God, he is delivered by this disease and it is raised to the height of the purity. Because this thing it is above nature, and the one who trampled the inciting of the body and its pleasures, reaches somehow, outside the body. That`s why it is impossible to the man (so to say) to fly with his own wings to this high and heavenly crown of the holiness, and to make himself follower to the Angels, if he will not be raised from mud, by the grace of God. Through this, still being on earth, they are - like the Apostle says – living in heavens[24].

And the sign of the achievement of this virtue, we have it into that the soul even in the time of the sleep, does not take notice to any image of the shameful hallucination. Because, even such a movement it is not reckoned a sin, it still shows that the soul it still is sick and it is not delivered by the passion. And that`s why we have to believe that the shameful hallucinations that happen to us in the sleep, are a prove of our idleness until now, and of the helplessness which it is into us, because the leak which happens to us in the time of the sleep, shows the sickness which sits hidden in the hidden places of the soul. That`s why also the Doctor of our souls has put the medicine into the hidden places of our souls, where He knows that also the causes of the sickness are, saying: "Who looks at a woman to lust her, he already committed adultery with her in his heart."[25] Through this He has strengthen not so much the curious and fornicator eyes, but mainly the soul placed inside, which used badly the eyes that were given by God for a good purpose. That`s why the word of the wisdom doesn`t say: "With all guarding, guard your eyes", but "With all guarding, guard your heart"[26], applying the medicine of guarding especially to the one which uses the eyes toward what it wants. Therefore, let`s this one to be our first guard of our cleansing: if will come into our thought the memory of a woman, sprung out from the devilish cunningness, for instance of the mother, or of the sister, or of some devoted women, let`s us immediately banish it away, lest tarrying much at this memory, the deceiver of the ones lacked of skills, to roll down the cogitation from these faces to shameful and hurtful

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there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."; ROB: "And when somebody fight at the games, he does not take the crown if he has not fought according to the law of the game."

[24] Philippians: 3: 20-21: KJB: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: // Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."; ROB: "As for us, our rebuking it is in heaven, from where also expect a Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, // Who will change the appears of the body of our humbleness, to be alike the body of His glory, working with the power that He has to tell himself everything."

[25] Matthew: 5: 28: KJB: "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."; ROB: "But I say to you; whosoever looks at the woman, by lusting her, he already has committed sin into his heart."

[26] Proverbs: 4: 23: KJB: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."; ROB: "Guard your heart more than anything, because from it springs out the life."

hallucinations. That`s why also the first commandment given by God to the first man, asks us to guard the head of the snake[27], namely the beginning of the hurtful thought, through that one tries to sneak inside us, lest through the receiving of the head, which it is the first spring of the thought (*προσβολη*), to receive also the body of the snake, namely the consent (*συγχατανεσιζ*) with the pleasure, and through this to bring the cogitation to the forbidden deed. But it is ought, as it is written: "In the mornings let`s kill all the sinful ones of the earth"[28], namely through the light of the conscience, to distinguish and to destroy all the sinful thoughts from the land, which is our heart, according to the teaching of the Lord; and until they still are babies, the sons of the Babylon, namely the cunning thoughts, let`s kill them, crushing them on the rock, which is Christ. If they become mature men, through our consent, they will not be defeated without great sigh, and heavy tiredness. But besides the ones told from the Holy Scripture, it is good to remember also the words of the Holy Fathers. Thereby, Saint Basil, the Bishop of the Caesarea of Cappadocia, says: "Neither I know woman, nor bashfully I am". He knew that the gift of the virginity it is not achieved only through the physical remoteness by the woman, but through the holiness and the cleansing of the soul, which are gained through the fear of God. The Fathers say also, that we cannot gain the perfect purity, if we don`t achieve first in our heart the true humbleness of the thought; neither of the true knowledge we cannot be worthy, until the passion of the fornication tarries into the hidden places of the soul. But to perfect the meaning of the righteousness, we will remember another word of the Apostle, and then we will end our word: "Search for peace with everybody and the sanctification, without which nobody will be able to see God"[29]. That he speaks about this, it can be seen from the ones which he adds, saying: "To not be somebody adulterous, or worldly, like Esau."[30] As much as is heavenly the virtue of the holiness, as much it is warred with bigger haunting of enemies. That`s why we are indebted to strive not only with the restraint of the body, but also with the crushing of the heart, and with frequent prayers, weaved with sighs, to quench the oven of our body - of which the emperor of the Babylon lights it every day through the enticements of the lust – with the dew of the Holy Ghost. Besides these, a very powerful weapon we have the watchfulness, the one after God. Like the guard of the day prepares the holiness of the night,

[27] Genesis: 3: 15: KJB: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."; ROB: "Enmity I will put between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; this one will crush your head, and you`ll sting her heel."

[28] Psalm 101: "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord."

[29] Hebrews: 12: 14: KJB: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"; ROB: "All of you seek the peace and the holiness, without which nobody will see God."

[30] Hebrews: 12: 16: KJB: "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."; ROB: "And not to be some of you, fornicator, or defiled as Isav, who for a meal sold his right of first born."

so the watchfulness from the time of the night opens for the soul the path toward the purity of the day.

III. About the Love of Money

The third fight we have it against the devil of the love of money. This war it is foreign, and comes from outside of the nature, using the disbelief of the monk. In fact, the incitation of the other passions, namely of the anger and of the lust, take their occasions from the body, and they have, somehow, their seedling of the nature, from the birth. That`s why they are defeated only after a long time. The sickness of money, however, coming from outside, it can be cut easier, if there are diligence and heed. But if it is not noticed, it makes itself more harmful than the other ones, and harder to defeat. Because is "the root of all evilness", according to the Apostle. Let`s notice that: the natural impulses of the body are seen not only to the children, into whom there isn`t yet the conscience of the good and bad, but also and the very small children and at the toddlers, which don`t have any trace of pleasure into them, but they still have the natural impulse. Also, we observe at the little children the pin of the anger, when we see them turned against the one who has bothered them. And I am saying these not rebuking the nature like a cause of the sin (not be it), but to show that the anger and the lust were weaved together with the nature of the man by the Builder Himself, with a good purpose, but through idleness they slip from the natural ones of the body into the unnatural ones. In fact, the impulse of the body was left by the Builder toward the birth of children, and toward the continuation of the human race through descent ones from another ones, not toward fornication. Likewise, the impulse of the anger was seeded into us toward salvation, to be anger against the sin, not against our neighbor. Consequently, the nature into itself it is not wicked, even if we use it in a bad way. Or will we reckon guilty the Builder? It is guilty the one who has given the iron toward a useful and necessary use, if the who has received it uses it for killing?

We have told these wishing to show that the passion of love of money does not have its cause into the natural ones, but only into the bad and wicked free will. This sickness when it finds the soul being lukewarm and unbeliever, at the beginning of the rejection of the world, sows into him some justified causes and blessed in his opinion, to keep something from the ones that he possesses. This passion depicts into the thought of the monk a long old age, and whispers to him that the ones received from the monastery are not sufficient for his comfort, not speaking about the time when he is sick, but neither when he is in good health; then says to him that there does not exist any care for the sick ones and if he won`t have some gold saved he will die into misery. End then, sneaks into his mind the thought that he won`t be able to stay for a long time into the monastery, due to the hardship of the tasks and due to the minute surveillance of the Father. And after he deceives his mind with this kind of thoughts, to keep for himself at least a penny, the enemy convinces him to learn a craft about the Abba does not know, from which he

will be able to multiply his silver that he covets after. Then the rascal deceives him with hidden hopes, depicting into his mind the earning that he will have from his manual labor and then the carefree living. And in this way, giving himself all to the care of the earning, does not take heed to anything from the adverse ones, not even to the darkness of despondency, that engulfs him in case he does not have part of gain; so as to some the stomach makes their God, so does to this one the gold. That`s why the blessed Apostle, knowing this, he has called the love of money not only "the root of all evilness", but also "idolatry". Let`s then take heed, at how much evilness this passion drags the man, if pushes him also at the idolatry. Because after the lover of money moved away his mind from the love of God, he loves the idols of the men carved into gold.

Darkened by these thoughts and advancing even much more into evilness, the monk cannot have any obedience, but he rebels, suffers, fretted at everything, answers against, and not finding any awe, he goes like a loose horse into precipice. He does not satisfy himself with the daily meal, but shouts openly that he cannot endure these endlessly. He says that God isn`t only there, and he did not lock his salvation into that Monastery; and if he won`t get away from there, he will be lost.

The put aside money, helping this broken reckoning, sustain him like some wings to cogitate at the getting out from the Monastery, to answer roughly and with pride at all commandments, and to reckon himself like a stranger from outside. Anything he would see into Monastery that needs to be straightened, he does not take heed to it, if he doesn't defame and blasphemes all that are done. Then he searches for reasons to anger or to sadden himself, to not seem glib, getting out without reason from Monastery. And if he can, he removes and another one from the Monastery, deceiving him with whispers and vain words, he does not give back to do it, wanting to have a coworker at his bad deed. And so being lit by the fire of his money, the lover of money won`t be able to be soothed into the Monastery, neither he will be able to live under obedience. And when the devil will kidnap him like a wolf, from the stable and, separating him from the herd, will take him to eat him, then the ordered works for certain hours into the monastic community, which were hard for him to fulfill them, the enemy will make him to fulfill them into his cell, day and night, with much zeal. But won`t set him free, however, to keep the way of the prayers, neither the order of the fasts; nor the canon of the watchfulness. But, after he has tied him with the madness of the love of money, he convinces him to have the entire zeal towards the manual labor.

Three are the sorts of this sickness which are totally forbidden by the godlike Scriptures, but also by the teachings of the Fathers. The first one it is the one which makes the monks to earn and to gather the ones they had not into the world; the second it is the one which makes them rejected the wealth, to repent, putting into their mind the thought to search for the ones that they have given to God; at last, the third one it is the one which, bonding the monk from the beginning, by disbelieve and laziness, doesn`t let him to be saved in a

consummated way by the things of the world, but puts into his mind the fear of poverty and the mistrust into the care of God, advising him to trespass the promises that he made when he separated himself by the world. The examples of these three sorts, like it was said, we have them found into the godlike Scripture. This way, Giezi[31], wanting to gain the money that he has not before, he gets rid himself of the gift of the prophesy, of which his teacher wanted to left him as legacy, and instead of blessing he has inherited eternal leprosy, through the curse of the Prophet[32]. Judas, wishing to get his money back, which he it has rejected before, following to Christs, he himself has followed not only from the bunch of the disciples, slipping toward the selling of the master, but also his own bodily life, through a forced death, he ended it[33]. And Ananias and Sapphira, keeping a part of the price of the treason, they are punished with death through the apostolic mouth[34]. The great Moses

[31] II Kings: 5: 22-27: KJB: "And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments. // And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him. // And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed. // But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither. // And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? // The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.": ROB: "And Gehazi answered: with peace. My master has sent me to tell you: Behold, now have come to me two youngsters from the mount of Ephraim, from the sons of the prophets; give them a silver talents and two garments. // And Naaman said: "Take, please, two silver talents". And he beseeched him and he tied two silver talents in two sacks and gave them to two servants and they brought the in front of him. // And when they reached under the hill he took them from their hands, and hid them into the house. And then he let the men go, so they left. // When, though, came and shown himself their master Elisha, he told him: wherefrom are you coming Gehazi? And he answered: "Your servant was nowhere". And Elisha said to him: Was not accompanying you when that man descended from the wagon and came to meet you? It is maybe the time to take silver, and clothing, olive trees and vineyards, big or small cows, men or women servants? // Let the leprosy of Naaman stick on you, and or your heirs for and ever!" And came Gehazi out from Elisha white of leprosy as the snow."

[33] Matthew: 27: 5: KJB: "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."; ROB: "And throwing him the silvers into temple, he left, and going, he hanged himself."

[34] Acts: 5: 1-10: **KJB**: "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, // And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. // But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? // Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. // And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. // And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. // And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. // And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. // Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. // Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband."; **ROB:** "And a man, called Ananias, with Sapphira, his woman, they sold their field. // And hiding from the price, knowing about this also his woman, he brought a part of the price, putting it at the feet of the apostles. // And Peter said: Ananias, why satan has filled your

commands himself in the "Second law", mysteriously, to them who promise to reject the world, but by the fear of disbelieve, they hold themselves again of the worldly things: "If there is anybody fearful and his heart trembles of fear, let him not get out to war, but let him turn at his home, lest his fear frighten the hearts of his brothers"[35]. May there be something else more founded and clearer than this testimony? I wonder we do not learn from this, we who reject the world, to reject it perfectly, and this way to get us out to the war, lest putting a feeble and corrupted beginning, to turn back also the other ones from the evangelic perfection, sowing fear into them? Even the good said word in the Scriptures: "that better is to give than to take"[36], they interpret it badly, forcedly changing its meaning, to fit it with their roving and with their lusty for silver. Also, the teaching of God which says: "If you want to be perfect, sell your wealth and give it to them who are poor and you will have treasure into heavens; and coming, follow Me"[37]. They reckon that instead to be poor, it is happier to master upon an own wealth and from its surplus to give to them in need. Let ones like these, to know that they have not rejected the world yet, neither have they reached at the monastic perfection, while they are ashamed about Christ and they do not take upon themselves the poverty of the Apostle, that through the labor of hands, to serve to themselves, and to them who are in need, to fulfill the monastic promise, and to be crowned with the Apostle, as one who, after they have scattered their old wealth, they right as Paul does, the good fight, in hunger and in thirst, in frost and without clothes[38]. Because if

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heart, to be you lying to the Holy Ghost and to hide from the price of the field? // Being sold would have not remained to you, and being sold would not have been under your dominion? For what have you put into your heart this thing? You did not lie to people, but to God. // And Ananias hearing these words he fell down and died. And great fear engulfed the ones who heard it. // And getting up the younger ones took him out they shrouded him and buried him. // After an interval as three hours, there coming in his wife, not knowing what happened. // And Peter said toward her: Tell me if you sold the field with this much? And she answered: Yes, with this much. // And, Peter said toward she; Why did you agree yourselves to tempt the Ghost of the Lord? Behold, the feet of the ones who have buried your husband are outside, and they will take you outside also you. // And she straightway fell at the feet of Peter. And entering, the young people, they found her dead and, taking her outside, they buried her next to her husband."

[35] Deuteronomy: 20: 8: KJB: "And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart."; ROB: "But also the chieftains of the army to tell the people and to say to them: Who is fearful and little in his heart , that one to be getting out and turning back home, to not be him making fearful the heart of his brothers, as hi heart is."

[36] Acts: 20,:35: KJB: "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."; ROB: "I have shown you everything, for laboring you this way, you must help the weaker ones and to remember the words of Lord Jesus Christ, for He said: Happier it is to give, that to take."

[37] Matthew: 19: 21: KJB: "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."; ROB: "Jesus said: If you want to be perfect, go, sell your wealth, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure into heaven; and then come and follow Me."

[38] II Timothy: 4: 7-8: KJB: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: // Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."; ROB: "The good fight I fought, the trip

the Apostle would have known that for the salvation is more useful the old wealth, he would not have despised his state of honor, because he says about himself that he was an honorable man and a Roman citizen[39]. Likewise, also they from Jerusalem, who were selling their houses and their lands and put the price at the feet of the Apostles, they would not done these ones, if they would have known that the Apostles keep as a happier thing that each one to feed himself from his own money and not from his own tiredness and from what the gentiles bring. Even clearer the same Apostle says about this in what he writes to the Romans, when he says: "And now I am going to Jerusalem to serve to the Saints, because Macedonia and Achaea deigned to do a help gathering for the deprived ones amongst of the Saints of Jerusalem. That they were willing, but also, they owe to them[40]. But even he himself, being often put into chains and into prisons, and tired by travelling, or impeded by all these to gain his food from his own hand labor, like he used to, he says that he received his food from the brothers from Macedonia, who came to him: "And my need was fulfilled by the brothers, who came from Macedonia"[41]. And he writes to the Philippians: "And you Philippians know that, getting I out from Macedonia, no church united with me when was about giving and taking, but you alone. Because and in Thessalonica once and twice you sent me the necessary ones."[42]

Therefore, according to the opinion of the silver lovers, some are happier than the Apostle and those, because they gave him from their wealth the necessary ones. But nobody will dare to say this, unless he has reached the last foolishness of the mind.

So, if we want to follow the evangelic commandment, and to entire Church from the beginning, founded on the foundation of the Apostles, let`s not follow our own reckonings, nor understand badly the ones that were said good. Because only in this way we will be able to follow to the Fathers, and we

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I ended, the faith I guarded. // From now on the crown of the righteousness it is prepared to me, which the Lord will be giving to me in that day, He, The Right Judge, and not only to me, but to all of the who loved His appearance."

[39] Acts: 22, 25: KJB: "And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?"ROB: "And when he was sent to be flocked, Paul said toward the centurion that was present: It is allowed to you to flock a Roman citizen, and not judged?"

[40] Romans: 15: 25: KJB: "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. // For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. // It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are."; ROB: "But now I go to Jerusalem, to sere to the saints."

[41] II Corinthians: 11: 9: KJB: "And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself."; ROB: "And being you present, and being I in wants, I have not troubled anybody. Because, what has lacked to me, it was brought by the brother from Chalcedony. And in everything I have guarded myself, and I`ll guard myself to not be a burden to you."

[42] Philippians: 4: 15-16: KJB: 'Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. // For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."; ROB: "You also know, Philippians, that at the beginning of the Gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church unites with me when it comes about giving and receiving, nut only you. // For even into Thessaloniki, once and twice, you send me to have the necessary ones. "

won`t be separated ever by the science of the congregational life, but we will verily reject this world. Good is to remember also here, the word of a Saint, who says that Saint Basil the Great would have said to a senator, who rejected without decision the world, and he was keeping some of his money, a word like this one: "Also you have lost the senator, and neither you have made the monk!". We ought therefore, to cut off with all diligence from our soul "the root of all evils", which it is the love of money, knowing that if the root remains, easily the branches grow up. And this virtue hardly it is acquired living outside of the congregational life, because only in the congregational life we don`t have to take care even for the most basic needs. So, having in front of our eyes the damnation of Ananias and Sapphira, let`s be afraid to keep for ourselves some of our old wealth. Likewise, being afraid by the example of Ghiezi, of the one who for the love of money he was given to the eternal leprosy, let`s shun of gathering the money which we do not had into the world. Thinking then at the end of Judas the one who hanged himself, let`s be afraid to take some of what we have rejected, despising it. And above all these, let us have forever before our eyes the sudden death, lest in the hour in which we do not wait, the Our Lord to come and to find out our conscience defiled with the love of money. Because He will say to us the ones which were said in the Gospel to that rich man: "You fool, into this night I will ask your soul, and the ones that you have gathered to whom will belong?"[43]

IV. About Anger

The fourth fight that we have it is against the ghost of the anger. And how much need there it is to cut, with the help of God, the venom carrier of death of this ghost, from the depth of our soul! Because smoldering this secretly into our heart, and blinding with darkened disturbances the eyes of the heart, we cannot achieve the power to distinguish the ones which are useful to us, neither the penetration of the spiritual knowledge. Likewise, we cannot guard the perfection of the good advice and we cannot make ourselves partakers to the true life, and our mind won`t reach to be capable so look at the godlike light. "Because it was disturbed my eye, he says, by anger."[44] But we cannot make us partaker to the godlike wisdom, even if all brothers would have reckoned us like being wise. Because it is written: "The anger dwells into the bosom of the foolish ones."[45] But we cannot also achieve the saving advices of the right reckoning, even the people reckon us dutiful. Because it is written: "The anger destroys even the dutiful ones."[46] We won`t be able neither to keep

[43] Luke: 12: 20: KJB: "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"; ROB: "And God said to him: You fool! Into this night they will ask from you your soul. And the ones that you have prepared whose will they be them?"

[44] Psalms: 6: 7: KJB: "Mine eye is consumed because of grief"; ROB: "Remember God that my life it is a breath, that y eye won`t see the happiness anymore."

[45] Ecclesiastes: 7, 9 (LXX): "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools."

[46] Proverbs: 15: 10 (LXX): "Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die."

the scales of the righteousness with an awaken heart, because it is written: "The anger of the man doesn`t work the righteousness of God".[47] Neither the adornment, nor the good face, we cannot achieve it, despite that all praise us, because it is written again: "The wrathful man it is not with a good face"[48]. Therefore, he who wants to come at the consummation and lusts to fight the spiritual fight according to the law, be him foreign to all anger and wrath. Look at what the pot of the choice commands to us: "All the bitterness and the wrath and the anger and the shouting and the blasphemy to be lifted from you, together with all evilness"[49]. And when he says "all", he didn`t let us any reason for which the anger to be useful or justified. So, he who wants to correct his brother when that mistakes, or to rebuke him, let him strive to guard himself untroubled, lest wanting to heal the other one, to attract upon himself the sickness of that one and to hear the word of the Gospel: "Doctor, heal yourself"[50], or: "Why you see the straw from the eye of your brother, and the beam from your eye you don`t know it"[51].

For any reason that the anger would boil into us, it blinds the eyes of our soul and doesn`t let him to see the Sun of the Righteousness. Because as we put on our eyes, either foils of gold, or of lead, as that from every reason would light our anger, being it, so called, justified or not, in the same way it darkens the seeing power.

Only then we use the anger in a natural way, when we start it against the passionate and pleasures loving thoughts. The Prophet teaches us so, saying: "Get anger, and do not sin"[52]: namely, light you the anger upon you sins and upon the evil thoughts and not commit sin doing the ones put by them into the mind. This meaning it is shown clearly by the next word: "… for those that you say into your hearts, into your bedding repent yourself"[53]; namely, when the evil thoughts come into your heart, cast them out with anger, and after you will have them removed, being you as on a bed of the peace of the soul, repent you. Together with this one speaks also the blessed Paul, using his word and adding to it: "Let not the sun to set over your anger,

[47] James: 1: 20: "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."; ROB: "Because the anger of the man does not work the righteousness of God."
[48] Proverbs: 11: 25 (LXX): "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."
[49] Ephesians: 4: 31: KJB: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:"; ROB: "For any bitterness, and anger, and bursting up, and defamation to perish from you, together with any evilness."
[50] Luke: 4: 23: KJB: "And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country."; ROB: "And He said to them: Verily you will say to Me this parable: Doctor, heal yourself! How many we have heard that were done into Capernaum, do tem also here into your country."
[51] Luke: 6: 41: KJB: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"; ROB: "Why do you see the straw from the eye of your neighbor, and you do not consider te beam from your eye."
[52] Psalms: 4: 4: KJB: "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.";
[53] Ibid footnote no. 9.

neither give you place to the devil"[54]; namely not to make Christ, the Sun of the Righteousness, to set for your hearts, because you anger Him through the consent with the evil thoughts, and then, through His removal, to find the devil place for dwelling into you. About this Sun also God says through the Prophet: "And to them who fear My Name, will arise to them the Sun of the Righteousness and healing will be into His wings"[55].

And if we will take the said one literarily, neither to the sunset we are not allowed to keep the anger. What will us say then, about them who, in the savageness and rabies of their passionate mood, they keep the anger not only to the sunset, but, stretching it over many days, they are silent to each other, and they no longer cast the anger out with the word, but through silence they increase the venom of keeping in mind the evil, toward their perdition. They do not know that they must run away from the anger in deed, but also with the one from thought, lest, being their mind blackened by the darkness of the remembrance of the evil, to fall down from the light of the knowledge and from the right reckoning and to be deprived by the dwelling of the Holy Ghost. For this one, also God commands in the Gospel to let our gift before the altar and to reconcile with our brother[56]. Because it is not possible to be the gift well received, until the anger and the keeping in mind of the evil still are into us. Likewise, the Apostle, saying: "Ceaseless you pray"[57], and: "Be the man praying everywhere, raising pious hands, without anger and without thoughts"[58], he teaches us the same things. It rests to us, consequently, either not to pray ever and through this to make us guilty before the apostolic command, or, forcing ourselves to keep what it was commanded to us, to do this without anger and without keeping the evil into mind. And because many times when our brothers are sad or troubled, we say that we don`t care, and that they aren`t troubled because of us, the Doctor of the souls, willing to pluck out from the root, namely from the heart, the causes of the anger, he commands us that not only when we are upset with our brother to let our gift and reconcile with our brother, but also if he got upset upon us, rightly or wrongly, to heal him, justifying us, and then to bring the gift.

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[54] Ephesians: 4: 26-27: KJB: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: // Neither give place to the devil."; ROB: "get anger, and do not wrong; the sun not be setting upon your anger; // neither give place to the devil."

[55] In the Romanian Philokalia there it is mentioned "Malachi: 3, 20", which totally corresponds with the partition of the text from ROB. In KJB, there is a fourth chapter, which comprises the verses numbered: 19 - 24 from the end of the chapter no. 3 from ROB. So, if we present here the quotation from KJB, it would be: "Malachi: 4, 2: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."

[56] Matthew: 5: 24: KJB: "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."; ROB: "Leave you gift there in front of the altar, and go first and reconcile with your brother, and then, coming, bring your gift."

[57] I. Thessalonians: 5: 17: KJB: "Pray without ceasing."; ROB: "Pray always."

[58] I. Timothy: 2: 8: KJB: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."; ROB: "I want so that the men to pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without anger and without doubting."

But why to tarry too much at the evangelical times, when we can learn this also from the Old Law? Even would seem that this is more forgiving, though it also says: "Do not hate your brother into your heart"[59], and: "The ways of them who remember the evil, towards death (it leads)."[60] And hence there it is forbidden not only the anger with the deed, but it is condemned also the anger from the thought. That`s why, following to the godlike laws, let us fight with all our power against the spirit of anger, of which disease we have it inside us.

Let`s not search for loneliness, and for wilderness, just because we get anger with people, as though there would not be the one who starts us toward anger, or because it is easier to achieve the virtue of the longsuffering in loneliness. Because out of pride and out of the will to blame not ourselves and to ascribe not to our idleness the causes of the perturbation, we crave after the separation from of brothers. Consequently, until we throw the causes of our helplessness on the account of the others, it is not possible to reach at the perfection of the long suffering. The end of our correction and of our peace it is not gained from the long suffering that our neighbor has for us, but from the long suffering of the evil that our neighbor does it to us. So, if we will flee from the fight of long suffering, searching for wilderness and loneliness, our unhealed passions, which we will bring them there, will remain hidden, but won`t be plucked out. Because the wilderness and the withdrawal of them who are not delivered from passions, not only keep their passions unscathed, but it even cover them, so that does not let them to feel themselves of what passion they are overcome, but, on the contrary, it puts into their mind illusions of virtue and makes them to believe that they have won, the long suffering and the humbleness, until there isn`t somebody to tempt them and to try them. But when comes a cause, which arouses them and tries them, the passion which smolder in secret, jump at once as the bridle less horses, fed for long time in silence and rest, in their enclosures, and drag with even more tempest and savageness, their horseman towards perdition. because even more the passion get wild into us, when the connection with the people is interrupted, then we lose even the shadow of the forbearance and of the longsuffering, which it seemed to us to have them in the company of the brothers; this one it is due to the interruption of the connection with the people and due to the loneliness. Because, as the poisonous beasts which stay into their dens from the wilderness, immediately that they catch somebody approaching to them, they show up their entire rabies, as the passionate men, who are rested due to the wilderness, and not due to some disposition of their virtue, and they show their true color of their venomous face when they catch somebody that has got closer

[59] Leviticus: 19: 17: KJB: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."; ROB: "Do not hate your brother into your heart, but to rebuke your neighbor, to no carry his sin."

[60] Proverbs: 12, 28 (LXX): in KJB we have: "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death. "; in ROB we have: "On the path of the righteousness there is the life and the way that she marks, the immortality, and the way of madness leads to death".

and stirs them up. That`s why them who search for the consummation of the gentleness, they ought to put the entire endeavor, not to get upset with the people, and not even on the animals and on the soulless things. Because I remember me when I was living into wilderness that I started with anger over the reed and thrown it away, because I didn`t like either the thickness, or its thinness; likewise over the wood, when I wanted to cut them off, and I couldn`t to do it quickly, or over the flint, when I strived to produce sparks and the fire didn`t come out immediately. So much was stretched the cord of my anger than I started it also over the soulless things.

Therefore, it we want to achieve the happiness that was promised by God, we are indebted to restrain ourselves, as was told, not only with the anger in deed, but also with the anger from the thought. Because it is not so useful to keep your mouth shut in the time of anger, to not let out furious words, as it is useful to clean your heart by the keeping in mind of the evil and to not stir upon your brother cunning thoughts. The Evangelical teaching commands to be cut off better the roots of the passions than their fruits. Because, being the root of the anger cut off from the heart, there takes not place the deed of hate or of envy. Him who hates his brother, was called man`s killer, because he kills the man with the disposition of hate from his thought. Of course, in this case people don`t see the blood of the killed one shed by the sword, but God sees how that man was killed by the thought and by the disposition of hate. God will give to each one, either crown, or damnation, not only for the deeds, but also for the thoughts and decisions, as the Prophet says himself: "Behold, I come to gather their deeds and their thoughts."[61] Likewise says also the Prophet: "Their thoughts themselves will blame or defend one other, in the day that God will judge the hidden ones of the man."[62] But even the Master, teaching us that we must reject all the anger, says into Gospel: "His who angers on his brother guilty will be in the judgment day"[63]. Like this it says in the good copies of the text (the word: "in vain" it is an adding), according to the good thought of the Scripture about this thing. Because the Lord wants us to cut off in all ways the root and the spark itself of the anger, and no causes of it to be kept into us, lest, starting at the beginning from a so-called justified reason, after that to slip into the madness of the reasonless anger.

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[61] Isaiah: 66, 12: KJB: "For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory."; ROB, from the same verse it is like this: "But I come to gather together the nations and all tongues. They will come and see My glory,"

[62] Romans: 2, 15: KJB: "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)"; ROB: "What shows the deed of the Law written into their hearts, through the witness of their conscience and through their judgments, which blame or defend them."

[63] Matthew: 5, 22: KJB: "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."; ROB: "But I say to you: whosoever angers with his brother, he will be worthy of damnation: and who will say to his brother: you, worthless, he will be worthy of the judgment of the council; and who will say: you, fool, he will be worthy of the hell of fire."

And the perfect medicine for this sickness it is the following: "to believe that it is not forgiven to us to stir up the anger neither for right reasons, nor for the unjust ones. Because the spirit of the anger darkening our mind, there won`t be founded into us neither the light which helps us to discern the things, nor the strength of the standing right, nor the rudder of the justice. But neither temple of the Holy Ghost won`t be possible to be made our soul, as long as the spirit of the anger will master upon us darkening our mind. And at the end, having each day in front of us the icon of the death, which we don`t know when might come, let`s guard ourselves against the anger and to know that we don`t have any use of the immaculacy, neither of the rejection of the earthly ones, nor of the fasts and watchfulness, because if we will be mastered by the anger and hate, guilty will be us in the judgment day.

V. About Sadness

The fifth fight we have it against the spirit of sadness, which darkens the soul, for not being able to see any spiritual sight and it stops it from all good work. When this sly spirit encamps over the soul and darkens it in its entirety, does not allowed it to make its prayers with zeal, and to read the holy scripts with profit, nor suffer the man to be meek and lowly towards the brothers. It causes him nausea towards all the things and towards the promise of the life itself. Shortly speaking, the sadness disturbs all the saving advices of the soul and withers all its power and insistence, making him like a frantic one, and bonding him on the thought of despondency. That is why, if we think to fight the spiritual fight and to overcome the spirits of the evilness with the help of God, let`s defend our heart with the entire watchfulness against the spirit of the sadness[64]. Because, as the mob chews the coat, and the caries chew the wood, like so the sadness eats the man`s soul. The sadness makes the man to avoid all the good meeting, and does not let him to receive any word of advice from his true friends, as does not allow him to give them a good and peaceful answer. But engulfing the entire soul fills it up with bitterness and indifference. At last, it puts in his mind the thought to run away from people, as ones who have made to him cause of disturbance and does not let him to realize that not from the exterior comes hi illness, but it smolders inside, being shown when some temptations come. Because never would be wounded the man by another the man, if he does not have inside him the smoldering reasons of the passions. That`s why the Builder of everything and the Doctor of the souls, God, the Only One Who knows diligently the wounds of the soul, but let`s us cut off from us and to know that the health of the soul it is achieved not separating ourselves from people but living and exercising us with them who are virtuous. When, therefore, for some reasons, so called "justified", we separate from our brothers, we have not cut off the reasons of the sadness, but we have only changed them, because the illness which is smoldering inside can

[64] Proverbs / The Parables of Solomon: 4, 23: KJB: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."; 4, 23: ROB: "Guard your heart more than everything, because from it springs the life."

be lit also through other things. Because if we will remove these off from our heart, with the gift and the help of God, not only with the people we will easily live, but even with the wild beasts, as the blessed Job also says: "The wild beasts will be in peace with you."[65] So, we must fight firstly against the spirit of the sadness, which pushes the soul to despondency, to banish it away from our heart. Because this one did not let Cain to repent after he killed his brother, neither Judas after he betrayed the Lord. Let`s us get accustomed only with that sadness which it is comprised into the repentance for sins and weaved with the good hope. About this also the Apostle says: "The sadness that after God, works repentance towards salvation, without regret[66]. Because the sadness after God, nourishing the soul with the hope of the repentance, it is interweaved with joy. That`s why it makes the man zealous after all good work, friendly, humble and gentle[67], ready to suffer the evil and to endure all the good tiredness and the crushing, as one which it is truly after God. It makes to be shown into man the fruits of the Holy Ghost, which are: the joy, the love, the peace, the long suffering, the kindness, the faith and the restraint. From the enemy sadness however, we know the fruits of the evil spirit, namely: the idleness, the lack of patience, the anger, the hate, the resistance in word, and the laziness at prayer. It is healed through prayer, through the trust in God, through the cogitation to the godlike words and through the living with the pious people.

VI. About Idleness

The sixth fight we have it against the spirit of the idleness, which it is combined with the spirit of the sadness and works together with it. Dreadful and oppressive it is this devil and wars incessantly the monks. It falls around the sixth hour over the monk, causing him slackness, sadness and disgust, even towards the place where he is and towards the brothers with whom he lives, but even towards every work and the reading of the Holy Scriptures itself. It puts into his mind also thoughts of moving away, whispering him that if he won`t move to another places, meaningless will be for him all the time and the tiredness. Besides these it arouses also hunger into him around the sixth hour, how much it would not have happened after three days fasting, or after a very long travel, or after a heavy tiredness. Then it puts into his mind the thought that he will not be able to escape of this illness and of this hardship in no any other way, but only if he will get out often and will go to the brothers, giving him like a motif the use and the search of the helpless ones. And if it cannot deceive him only with these ones, it deepens him into a heavy sleep, and

[65] Job: 5, 23: KJB: "At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth."; ROB: "Because you will have covenant with the stones of the field and with the wild beast you will live in peace".

[66] II Corinthians: 7, 10: KJB: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."; ROB: For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation, without regret; and the worldly sorrow brings death."

[67] From here to the next footnote, it misses in G. P. 28, 897 (this note belongs to father Dumitru Stăniloae).

rushes over him even more furiously, being impossible to be banished in other way, but only through the prayer, through the restraint from the vain words, through the cogitation to the godlike words, and through patience into temptations. If it would not find the monk dressed up with these weapons, it will shoot him with its arrows, and it will make him flickering, scattered and lazy, urging him to wander through many monasteries and not to care about anything else, but only to find out where there are made better meals and drinks. Because nothing imagines the mind of the lazy one but thoughts like these ones. Through these ones it tangles him, after, with worldly thoughts and little by little attracts him into harmful occupations, until it gets him out totally from the monastic rank.

Knowing the godlike Apostle that this illness it is very heavy, and like a skillful doctor wanting to pluck it out from our soul from the roots, he show especially the motifs from which it is born, saying: "We command to you, brothers, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to guard yourself against any brother who walks disorderly, and not according to the rules[68] that you have taken from us. Because, you yourselves, you know how you must to follow us, because we have not walked disorderly amongst you, neither we ate from somebody bread offered like a gift, but with tiredness and painstaking labor, working day and night. Not only because we would not have the right to do so, but also for you to have us example and to follow us. When we were at your place, these ones we commanded to you, that if somebody doesn`t work, not to eat. We hear that there are some of you, who walk disorderly doing nothing, but spying. To some like these ones we command them and pray to them into Jesus Christ, that they working into quietness, to eat their bread[69]. Let`s take heed how clear the Apostle shows to us the causes of the idleness, when he calls "without order" them who don`t work, unveiling in a single word their many sins. Because he without order it is also without awe and naughty in words and ready towards mockery, that`s why also incapable of tranquility and slave of the idleness. Therefore, the Apostle commands to everybody to withdraw from this kind of people, guarding against them like against the plague. The he says: "And not according to the rules, which you have taken from us", showing through these words that those ones are proud and despising and they undo the apostolic rules. And he says again: "I did not eat

[68] In the Romanian Philokalia there it is used the word "predanie", which in the expression "predania biserici" it is equivalent to "the tradition of the church". In this case from here, we believe that the meaning of the word is rather "the set of rules". (t. n.)

[69] Thessalonians: 3, 6-12: KJB: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. // For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; // Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: // Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. // For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. // For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. // Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."

bread from nobody, as a gift, but with tiredness and toil, working day and night". The teacher of the gentiles, the preacher of the Gospel, he that was kidnapped to the third heaven, the one who says that the Lord has commanded that them who preach the Gospel, from the Gospel they to live, he works with toil, day and night, to not burden anybody. Then, how will be us lazy at work, and will us search for bodily rest, once we have not been entrusted with the preaching of the Gospel, neither with the care of the churches, but only with the taking care of our soul? Then, showing more clearly the harm that is born from the staying without work, he adds: "nothing working, but spying". Because, from the staying without work it is issued the spying, and from the spying it is issued the lack of order, and from the disorder are issued all the sins. Showing to them also the salvation, he says: "And to some as these we command them that into tranquility working to eat their bread". Then he tells them into an even more rebuking way: "If somebody doesn`t wants to work, then not to eat". Being taught by these apostolic commands, the Holy Fathers from Egypt, they do not allow any time into which the monks to be without work, especially the young ones, knowing that through the patience of the work they banish the idleness, they achieve their food, and help them who are deprived. Because they do not work only for their needs, but from the surplus they give to the strangers, to the poor and to them who are in prisons, believing that such a good deed it is a holy sacrifice and it is well received by God. And the Fathers say also this: "he who works it is often warred only by one devil and it is troubled only by that one, while the one who does not work, it is enslaved by many evil spirits. Besides these, it is good to bring forth a word of Abba Moses, the most tried from the Fathers, that he told me. Because sitting I for a little while into the wilderness, I was bothered by idleness and I went to him and I said to him: "Yesterday, being dreadfully upset by idleness and getting I very weak, I would not have been delivered by it, if I would not have passed by Abba Paul". And answered to this Abba Moses and said to me: "Know you that, you are not delivered by it, but even more you surrendered to it and became a slave of it. So, know you that, even more will fight you, as one who trespass the order, if you won`t try from now one to overcome it with the patience, with the prayer and with the work of the hands".

VII. About the Vain Glory

The sixth fight that we have it is against the spirit of the vain glory. This passion it is very divers and very thin, and it is not noticed easily not even by him himself who suffers by it. The attacks of the other passions are more evident and that`s why it is somehow easier the fight with them, because the soul knows its enemy and immediately overthrows it through the resistance with the word and through the prayer. But the sin of the vain glory, having many guises, as was said, it is hard to defeat. It tries to hurt the soldier of Christ, through any occupation, through the voice, through the word, through the silence, through the quietness, even by long suffering. Him, who it cannot deceive through the expensiveness of the clothes, it tries to tempt him through

bad clothing, and him who it could not to brag through honor, it brings that one to madness, through the so-called endurance of disrespect; and him who it could not push to the vain glory through the competence in word, it deceives him through silence, making him to imagine that he has achieved his rest. If it could not weaken somebody through the abundance of meals, it weakens him through the position that he keeps by the sake of the praises. Shortly speaking, all things, all the occupations give occasion of war to this cunning devil. Besides these, it makes the monk to think about priesthood also. I remember an old man, while I was living into the ascetic wilderness. Going this one at the cell of some brother to inquire that one, approaching to the door, he heard him talking. And reckoning that the old man is reading from the Scripture he staid to listen, until he felt that the brother has got out from his mind due to the vain glory and he has ordered himself as deacon, doing just the dismissal[70] of the called ones. So, immediately that the old man has heard these ones, pushing the door he entered and being welcomed by the brother he worshipped him and asked him if he was waiting for a long time at the door. And the old man answered him jokingly, saying: "I have just arrived now, when you were doing the dismissal of the called ones". Hearing these, the brother fell to his feet, asking him to pray for him, to be delivered from this straying.

I have mentioned this, wanting to show at how much insensibility it is the man brought by this devil. Therefore, he who wants to fight perfectly and to take the crown of the perfect righteousness, he must strive in all ways to overcome this beast with many heads. He has to have always in front of his eyes the word of David: "The Lord has scattered the bones of them, who are pleasant to people"[71]. Therefore, they have not to do anything looking for the praise of the people, but only searching for the reward from God. Be him rejecting unceasingly, the thoughts which come into his heart and praise him, and to despise himself before God. Because, only this way, will he be able, with the help from God, to be delivered from the spirit of the vain glory.

VIII. About Pride

The eighth fight we have it against the spirit of the pride. This one it is very dreadful and more savage than all those from before. It fights especially with the consummated ones, and with the ones who have climbed almost at the top of the virtues, trying to overthrow them. And as the plague, bringing corruption does not destroy only one limb of the body, but the entire body, so the pride does not corrupt only a part of the soul, but the entire soul. Each of the other passions, although they trouble the soul, fight only with the opposite virtue and tries to overcome it, darkens only a part of the soul. The passion of

[70] The Romanian term used is: "otpust".

[71] Psalms: 53, 6 in KJB: "There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them."; 52, 7 in ROB: "Because God has scattered the bones of them who are pleasant to men; they were ashamed, because God has accursed them."

the pride, however, darkens the entire soul and overthrows it into the deepest precipice. To understand more clearly the spoken ones, let`s take heed at the following thing: gorging of the stomach strives to break the restraint; the fornication, the cleanness; the love of money, the poverty; the anger, the gentleness; and the other sorts of the sin the other kinds of the opposite virtues. But, the sin of pride, when takes possession over the poor soul, like a most dreadful tyrant who has conquered a big and tall city, overthrows it entirely and will destroy it to the ground. Witness about this it is that angel, which for pride he has fallen from the sky. Because, being him built by God and adorned with all virtue and wisdom, he did not want to recognize those ones as being came from the gift of the Master, but from his own nature. That`s why he considered himself just like God. This thought of him, being rebuked by the Prophet, by saying: "You have told into your heart: I will sit on a high mountain, I will put my stool over the clouds and I will be likewise the Highest"[72]. And you are a man, and not God. And again, another Prophet says: "Why do you boast into evilness, you mighty one?"[73], and the other ones of the psalm. So, knowing these, let`s fear and with "all the guarding to defend our heart"[74] against the spirit of the pride, the one which brings death, saying inside ourselves each time we have achieved a virtue, the word of the Apostle: "Not me, but the gift of God, Who is with me"[75], and the one said by the Lord: "Without Me you cannot do anything"[76], or the one said by the Prophet: "If the lord would not build the house, in vain would the builders toil"[77], and in the end that one said by the Apostle: "Not of him who wants, neither of him who runs, but of God, Who has mercy."[78] Because even it would be there somebody as much as possible with the zeal and as much as possible with the diligence,

[72] Isaiah: in KJB: 14: 13-14: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: // I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High."; in ROB: 14: 13-14: "You, who said into your thought: "I will raise myself into heavens and above the stars of the Mighty God I will place my throne! Into the holy mountain I will place my dwelling, in the edges of the North side. // I will climb myself above the clouds and like the Highest I will be."

[73] Psalm 52, 1: KJB: "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?"; 51, 1: ROB: "Why do you boast into evilness, you mighty man?"

[74] Proverbs: 4, 23: KJB: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."; The Parables of Solomon: 4, 23: ROB: "Guard your heart more than anything else, for from it gushes the life."

[75] I Corinthians: 15, 10: KJB: "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."; 15, 10: ROB: "But through the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which it is in me wasn`t in vain, but I labored more than they all. Yet not me, but the grace of God which is with me."

[76] John: 15, 5: KJB: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."; 15, 5: ROB: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he that abides in Me, and I into him, that one brings forth much fruit, because without me you cannot do anything."

[77] Psalms: 127, 1: KJB: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."; 126, 1: "If the Lord would not build the house, in van would toil they who build it; if the Lord would not guard the city, in vain would wake he who guards it."

[78] Romans: 9, 16: KJB: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."; 9, 16: ROB: "So, that, it is not neither from he who wants, nor from he who runs, but from God, Who has mercy."

being tied to the body and to the blood, he wouldn`t reach the consummation, but only through the mercy of Christ and through His grace. Because Jacob says: "All the good giving from above it is"[79]; and the Apostle Paul says: "What do you have, that you have not taken? And if you have taken it, why you praise yourself like you would not have taken and like you are bragging yourself with your own things?"[80]

And, about that the salvation comes to us through the grace and the mercy of God, it gives us true witness that thief who has received the heaven not as a price of the virtue, but through the grace and the mercy of God. These being known, by our fathers, all of them, with a single voice they taught, that we cannot reach on another way at the consummation of the virtue, but only through the humbleness. And this one is born from faith, from the fear of God, from gentleness and from the perfect poverty, through which it comes to us also the perfect love, with the grace and with the love of people of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom is ought the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Pious Gherman the Dacian-Roman
(Centuries IV-V)[81]

Pious Gherman was a relative of Saint John Cassian and he was his friend since John Cassian's childhood. He was born around the middle of the Century IV, probably within the same "borders of the Casian people and of the Caves", from Tomis Eparchy. Being older than his compatriot, Gherman entered from his youth the monastic ascesis, at one of the monasteries existing in Tomis, Histria, Callatis, or Axiopolis. For many "Scythian" ascetics were living in ascesis in caves, as the numerous paleo-Christian toponyms attest it, like: "The Cave", "The Caves", "The Little Church", "The Man's Church" etc., it is believed that Pious Gherman too lived in ascesis in one of those caves.

This ascetic from Tomis was the first spiritual father of Saint John Cassian and his first teacher who initiated Saint Cassian on the path of the salvation towards Christ. After a short period of ascesis together with his friend, in one of the monasteries from Pontic Dacia, Pious Gherman lived in ascesis, together with Saint Cassian, at Bethlehem (380-385), near to the Cave of Nativity of the Lord. Then he left for Egypt, together with his friend, and they visited all the big monasteries and the hermitages form the Nile's Valley, and

[79] Jacob: 1, 17: KJB: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."; 1, 17: ROB: "All the good giving and all the consummated gift from above it is, descending from the Father of the lights, to Who there is not any changing or shadow of movement."

[80] Corinthians: 4, 7: KJB: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"; 4, 7: ROB: "Because who makes you different? And what do you have, of which you have not received it? And if you have received it, why do you brag yourself like you have not received it?"

[81] *Churchly Writers in the Ancient-Romanian Epoque*, pp. 217-250.

they visited also the anchorites from Nitria Mountain and from Sinai. In the year 399, Pious Gherman and Saint Cassian settled down in Constantinople, in the vicinity of Saint John Chrysostom, whom they loved so much.

In the year 404, Saint John Chrysostom was exiled and deposed from his throne by Emperor Arcadius, and consequently to that Pious German and Saint John Cassian went to Rome, in order they to mediate in favor of the great patriarch and teacher of the entire Christian world, in front of Pope Inocentius I. From here ww don't know where Pious Gherman withdrew at his old age. He passed away from this life either in the monastery founded by John Cassian in Marseille, or he returned in his country, in Pontic Dacian, where it is believed that he ended the trip of this life sometimes in the first decades of the Century V.

BISHOP TIMOTHY
Of Tomis
(the first half of the Century V)[82]

It is not known the origin of this bishop of Tomis. It is believed that he was born at South of River Danube, tonsured and formed in monasticism at one of the monasteries from Cappadocia where, due to Saint Basil the Great, the monastic life became flourishing during the Centuries V-VI. As his forerunners too, Bisop Timothy was a good Orthodox theologian, a profound knower of the dogmas established by the Holy Fathers, as also of the theological disputes from his time, which were disturbing the entire Byzantine Empire. In his eparchy, Bishop Timoty was as active as his forerunners were: Bretanion, Gherontius, and Theotimus I. He built and renewed several basilicas and monasteries, and he much protected the autochthonous Dacian-Romanian monasticism. He also catechized the "Scythian nomads" (Goths and Huns) who weren't yet converted to Christianity.

Bishop Timothy shepherded the Tomis Bishopric during the first half of the Century V and he actively participated to the Third Ecumenical Synod held in Ephes in the year 431, against the heresy of Nestorius, where Bishop Timothy was probably accompanied by some taught "Scythian" abbots and monks. There he signed, as the 170th signatory, the "12 anathemas" issued by Saint Cyril of Alexandria, as also the decision for condemning the heretic Nestorius.

After a shepherding that lasted for over ten years, the Blessed Timothy, the good shepherd from Tomis of the flock of Christ passed away, peacefully, to the eternal realities, being him counted in the group of the pious fathers.

[82] *From River Danube to the Black Sea*, p. 30; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, p. 135.

BISHOP JOHN
Of Tomis
(Century V)[83]

After Bishop Timothy, the episcopate throne from Tomis was occupied by another great theologian of the Century V and fiery defender of the Orthodoxy in Pontic Dacia, namely the Blessed Bishop John.

This bishop constantly took part to the theological disputes from around the Ecumenical Synod IV from Chalcedon (451), so that he was often present in Constantinople. He possessed a vast Latin and Geek culture, and he translated several of the churchly writing from Greek to Latin. His contemporary, Latin writer Marius Mercator wrote about Bishop John of Tomis that "he was one of the best theologians of his time" and "one of the fieriest adversaries of the Nestorianism and of the Monophysitism", proving himself to be, as all the hierarchs from Tomis, a devoted defender of the Orthodox teaching, as one can ascertain from the few preserved fragments of his writings.

Before the year 449, Bishop John passed away peacefully, in Tomis, and he was added to his forerunners.

BISHOP ALEXANDER
Of Tomis
(Century V)[84]

This hierarch from Tomis occupied the throne of Tomis's eparchy around the middle of the Century V, during the great Monophysite unrests created by the Heretic Eutichius. The new shepherd of Pontic Dacia was a good theologian, capable of defending the Orthodoxy that was threatened all over Byzantine Empire.

Bishop Alexander took part to the Synod from the year 449 summoned by Emperor Theodoius the II and by the Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople, a synod that aspired to renew the decisions made in the year 448 for rejecting the Monophysite teaching and for rejecting Eutichius. Bishop Alexander signed the seven acts of the Synod: "Alexander reverendissimus spiscopus Tomitanorum civitatis provinciae Scythiae". At the great Ecumenical Synod from Chalcedon, held in the year 451, the Dacian-Roman couldn't attend, because of the "nomad" Huns' invasion in his eparchy, but he signed the synod-s acts. He remained faithful to the Gospel of Christ all the way to the end of his life, courageously defending the right-faith at the Danube's Mouths, and building new churches and monasteries in Dobrogea, and continuing the Christianization process in Pontic Dacia, through the Dacian-Roman missionary monks.

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[83] *Ibid*.

[84] *From River Danube to the Black Sea*, p. 30; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, p. 136.

After a fruitful shepherding that lasted for over a decade, the Blessed Bishop Alexander yielded his soul in the hands of God.

BISHOP THEOTIMUS II
Of Tomis
(the second half of the Century V)[85]

The Eparchy of Tomis had, in the year 458, a new shepherd in the person of the Bishop Theotimus II. He was a Thracian, maybe originating even from the Pontic Dacia. This hierarch of Tomis continued extending the jurisdiction of his eparchy, through missionary monks and priests sent from Tomis all the way to the Carpathia Dacia's heart, on an area comprising both the Danube's Plain and the sub-Carpathian area, as also the Moldavia's South. This action for Christianize the Dacia, one started in the Centuries II-III, in Banat, Oltenia, and Transylvania, by the Roman colonizers, and in the Buzău Mountain, in Bărăgan, and in the South of Moldavia, in the century IV, by the Dacian-Roman missionary monks and priests who came from Tomis Eparchy. The missionary activity of heralding the Gospel of Christ at Sought and at North of Danube River was quite strong under the guidance of Bishop Theotimus II.

In addition to his missionary work, Bishop Theotimus II was also a devoted theologian and a defender of the Orthodoxy of the Holy Fathers. He proved that in the answer requested by Emperor Leon I the Thracian (457-474), related to the decisions made by the Ecumenical Synod number IV from Chalcedon and also related to the election of the Monophysitism Patriarch Timothy Aurus in Alexandria. Bishop Theotimus II wrote that he had totally accepted the decisions made by the Synod from Chalcedon and that he asked for the removal of the Monophysite patriarch from Alexandria. His answer written in Latin, very Orthodox and very categorical, "it stands out by its simplicity and clarity".

It seems that the Blessed Bishop Theotimus II have a long shepherding in Tomis, a shepherding crowned with much success by continuing the Christianization process of the "nomad Scythians" (Huns), whose migrations and incursions caused many troubles to the autochthonous Christians. After he passed away, during the last decades of the Century V, the throne of the Tomis Bishopric was occupied by hierarchs whose names remain unknown to us. But their sacrifice wasn't in vain in this corner of the Dacian-Roman land.

[85] *From River Danube to the Black Sea*, p. 30; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, p. 136.

PIOUS DIONYSUS THE SMALL (THE "ROMAN") (ca. 470-545)[86]

The second great theologian, known translator of patristic writings and a monk full of love for Christ, bestowed to us by Pontic Dacia, after Saint John Damascene, he was Pious Dionysus the Small, namely the "Humble", and in Latin language called as the "Exiguus". This venerable servant of the Church of Christ was born in Scythia Minor, around the year 470, and he became a monk from his youth at one of the renown monasteries of the Tomis Eparchy, monasteries which produced during the Centuries IV-VII numerous "Scythian monks", known all over the empire as theologians, ascetics, and defenders of the Orthodoxy.

One of his teachers form his youth, whom he invokes later on in the "Preface to the Synodical Letter of Saint Cyril of Alexandria towards Nestorius", translated Latin, he was a certain Peter who reached to be a bishop at his old age. This one probably was the abbot of the monastery from Dobrogea where the Pious Dionysus became a monk, and whom the Peter was a spiritual father to and he accustomed Dionysus to the spiritual ascesis and to the fear of God. Lo which grateful words the blessed Dionysus the Humble wrote to his teacher: "I remember Your blessings, you Venerable Father and chosen adornment of the teaching of Christ, and I always have before my eyes the holy zeal for the spiritual food that you spent on me while I was a child, a zeal that neither space nor time can make me forget it. I pray you accept my thanks, which I know I can give on an appropriate height".

From Dobrogea, the Blessed Dionysus, also called as "the Roman", he went to Orient, to the Lord's Tomb, and I Asian Minor, an the he settled down in a monastery from Constantinople. He was a consummate theologian and he knew perfectly the Greek and Latin languages. At the request of Pope Gelasius to be sent to him a literate monk in order to translate in the West the canons of the Ecumenical Synods and some of the patristic writings, Dionysus was sent to Italy.

In the year 496 the Pious Dionysus arrived in Italy and he entered Saint Anastasia Monastery and he reached to be a renown translator form Greek to Latin, and he taught for many years the dialectics, together with his friend Cassiodorus, at the Vivarium University from Sout of Italy – Calabria.

His biographer and friend Cassiodorus said about the Blessed Dionysus that he was "a Scythian, but having totally Roman customs, very skillful in both languages, perfect knower of the Holy Scripture and of the dogmatics". He was also, "wise and simple, taught and humble, short in his speeches, virginal,

[86] *From River Danube to the Black Sea*, pp. 70-72; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, pp. 141-142; Fr. Prof. I. G. Coman, "The Springs of the Romanian Orthodoxy and the Dacian-Roman Christianity", p. 344, in *The Orthodoxy Review*, year XXXIII, no. 3/1981; Ibid, *Churchly Writers from the Ancient Romanian Epoque*, 1979, pp. 268-280; *Romanian Saints*… p. 234.

gentle, crying when hearing inappropriate gladness words, fasting without condemning those who were eating".

In Rome, the Pious Dionysus the Small (the Exiguus) lived and wrote under the leadership of ten popes, from Athanasius II to Virgilius. Being asked both by the shepherds of Rome who wanted to know better the writings of the Fethers from East, as also by his compatriots, the Scythian monks, the Blessed Dionysus the Small translated in Latin writings belonging to Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, and Proclus. Then he translated the canons of the first ecumenical Synods, printed in two editions; he edited "The Pontifical Decrees" and he translated lives of saints as: "The Discovery of the Head of Saint John the Baptist", "The Wonderful Repentance of Saint Theresa", and "The Life of Saint Pachomius".

The Pious Dionysus the Small was also a good knower of the astronomy, a science that he learnt while he was in Alexandria, a capital city that was the center of the ancient astronomy. Thus, he founded the Christian Dionysiac faith, instead of the pagan one, starting the calendar and the counting of the years "From the embodiment of our Lord Jesus Chridst, and not from Emperor Diocletian as it was before, in order to be made more known to anyone the beginning of our hope and in order to appear more clearly the cause of the redemption of the mankind, namely the Sufferings of our Savior". On this purpose he wrote two works: "Book about the Holy Easter" and "Paschal Arguments". The Christian era founded by Saint Dionysus the Humble officially entered its use at Rome, in the year 527, and until the beginning of the second millennium it was adopted by the entire Christian world.

He also wrote a florilegium of dogmatic patristic texts, selected from several Holy Fathers from East, from West, and from Africa, entitled "Exempla Sanctorum Patrum". Both by his Dacian-Roman origin and education, and also by his writings and translations from Greek and Latin, the Blessed Dionysus the Small "cast a real bridge between East and West, by placing into close contact the two Christian worlds".

At his old age, the Blessed Dionysus "the Roman", still living in his adoptive motherland Italy, he remembered Dobrogea, his natal motherland, and his gentle, right-believers, and humble compatriots, about whom he wrote beautiful words in the *Preface* towards the "venerable lords and beloved brothers John and Leontius": "It seems a new thing to the nescient people that Scythia, which seems dreadful by cold and in the same time because of barbarians, it raised full of warmth and wonderful men by the gentleness of their behavior. And the proof for the fact is like so, I know it not only by a knowledge provided me by the place of my birth, but it has been shown to be also by experience. It is a known fact that there (in Scythia Minor), in an earthly open community, I was reborn by the grace of God, through the Mystery of the Baptism, and I was found worthy of seeing the heavenly life in fragile body of the all-beloved Fathers, with which that region is glorified as by a special spiritual fructification. They faith shining for its connection with the good deed, it was for all people an example of life and sincerity. They weren't

caught in the net of any worldly worry and they could say together with the Apostle: "Our city in in heavens" (Phil. 3: 20). They (the Dacian-Romans) always kept with fearless strength the dogmas of the Orthodox faith, for, though they were simple in words, in science they weren't skillful…".

For the holiness of his life, for his profoundly Orthodox thinking and writings, the Pious Dionysus the Small, also known as "the Roman", is honored both in East and in the West, as a consummate monk, a philologist, a founder of the Christian era, and as a renown ascetic and theologian. Three great virtues adorned his whole life: his Orthodox faith, his humbleness of his heart, and his love for God and for people, qualities which are specific and millenary to the entire Romanian people.

Ending the trip of this life, the Pious Dionysus the Humble peacefully yielded his soul in the hands of Christ, around the year 545, and he is counted in the group of the Pious Fathers.

PIOUS JOHN MAXENTIUS
(Centuries V-VI)[87]

This pious father was "the most taught Scythian monk" contemporary to the Pious Dionysus the Small, born in Pontic Dacia, around the half of the Century V. He became a monk and he learnt the depths of the theology from his youth, in one of the monasteries from Tomis Eparchy; he traveled to several monasteries from East and he sometimes lived in the neighborhood of Constantinople.

The blessed monk John Maxentius wrote eight "libelli" books, treating upon diverse Christological and anthropological themes, and which strongly combated the Nestorianism and the Monophysitism of Eutichius. Lo some of the titles of his works: *Libellus fidei*, *Doctrinal Chapters*, *Orthodox Confession of Faith*, *The Union of the Word of God with His Own Body*, *Answers Against Acephalus*, *Against Nestorians*, *Answer to the Epistle of Pope Hormisdas* etc.

Together with other four Scythian monks: Peter, John, Leontius, and John, the Pious Maxentius wrote also *The Epistle of the Scythian Monks addressed to the African Bishops Datin and Fortunat*, which the upheld in the theological "Theopaschite" formula that "One of the Trinity suffered with His body".

After a long effort, by writing and by ascesis, for defending the right-Orthodox-faith and by confessing the *Gospel* of Christ, in an epoque so affected by divisions and by heresies, the blessed Dacian-Romanian monk John Maxentiu moved to the eternal life.

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[87] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, p. 142; Fr. Prof. I. G. Coman, "The Springs of the Romanian Orthodoxy", pp. 344-345, in *The Orthodoxy Review*, no. 3, 1981.

METROPOLITAN PATERNUS
Of Tomis
(The first half of the Century VI)[88]

The venerable metropolitan of Tomis, Paternus, he was, according to his name, of Latin origin, namely autochthonous Dacian-Roman, probably tonsured in monasticism and theologically educated in one of the famous monasteries from Tomis Eparchy. He reached to be shepherd of Pontic Dacia after a period of ca. 60 years (460-520) in which no other names of Tomis bishops are know to us.

The first document attesting him is a Latin inscription on a cultic vessel made of gilded silver, discovered in the year 1912 (today exposed in Hermitage Museum from Saint Petersburg), commissioned by Paternus at the beginning of the Century VI for the metropolitan cathedral of Tomis; that inscription mentions Paternus as "episcopus metropolitanus". After this text, other similar later texts attest that the Tomis Bishopric was elevated to the rank of metropolitanate, at the beginning of the Century VI, and that it has under its jurisdiction a number of 14 suffragan bishoprics existing in the cities of the Pontic Dacia. In a "List" of all metropolitan and episcopal thrones from the Ecumenical Patriarchy, existing at the beginning of the Century VI, published in the year 1981 by the Byzantinologist Cari de Boor, under the name of "Notitia Episcoporum", are mentioned under the jurisdiction of the Tomis Metropolitanate 14 episcopal thrones: *Axiopolis* (Cernavodă, Constanţa County), *Capidava* (Capidava, Constanţa County), *Carsium* (Hîrşova, Constanţa County), *Callatis* (Mangalia), *Constantiana* (Constanţa County), *Histria* (Isria, Constanţa County), *Tropaeum Traiani* (Adamclisi, Constanţa County), *Troesmis* (Igliţa, Tulcea Country), *Noviodumum* (Isaccea, Tulcea Country), *Aegyssus* (Tulcea), *Salsovia* (Mahmudia, Tulcea Country), *Halmyris* (Lower Dunavăţ, Tulcea County), *Zaldapa* (Tulcea Country), and *Dionysopolis* (Balcic).

All these episcopal thrones were founded in the beginning of the Century VI, in each city – "polis" – from Scythia Minos and from the entire Byzantine Empire, under Emperor Athanasius (491-518), consequently to a law issued by his predecessor Emperor Zenon (474-491), ordering every city to have its own bishop and a certain territory established to that bishopric.

Under Metropolitan Paternus, the Tomis Bishopric reached the biggest spiritual and organizational flourishing. The big number of the subordinated bishoprics proves the finishing of the Christianization process of the Romanian people in Pontic Dacia, where there were, in the Century VI, more than 100 basilicas (churches) and small churches, served by numerous priests (presbyters) and well-organized monasteries, hosting hundreds of monks, hesychasts living in caves, missionaries, and theologians with a high classic

[88] *From Danube River to the Black Sea*, p. 30; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, pp. 136-137; I. I. Georgescu, "The Christian Life in the Ancient Tomis", in the *Metropolitan of Moldavia and of Suceava Review*, no. 1-2, 1962, pp. 15-32.

and mystical-dogmatical education, well known everywhere. Thus, the "famous Scythian monks", contemporary to Archbishop Paternus, they were preoccupied with the dogma of the Holy Trinnity, creating the theological formula called as Theopaschite, that "One of the Trinity suffered in His body" ("unus the Sancta Trinitate passus est carne").

The Blessed Metropolitan Paternus by refusing to accept this dogmatic formula as Orthodox, the Scythian monks went, in the year 519, to see Emperor Justin (518-527) and asked for the recognition of their teaching. Form there they went to Rome and asked Pope Hormisdas for the same thing. This proves the Christological preoccupations of the Dacian-Roman monks from Dobrogea in the Century VI, and it also shows their fame all-over the Roman-Byzantine Empire as also the constant care of the bishops from Pontic Dacia for steadfastly defending the Orthodoxy at the mouths of River Danube.

In the year 520, Metropolitan Paternus was in Constantinople, were he participated together with other 20 hierarchs to the election of the new Ecumenical Patriarch Epiphanius. In the letter sent to Pope Hormisdas on that occasion, Paternus signed under the title: "Paternus, misericordia Dei, episcopus provinciae Scythias metropolitanus".

In his bishopric, Metropolitan Paternus prepared missionary monks and priests whom he sent at Noth of River Danube, in the Carpathian Dacia, were they helped to organize parishes and small monastic settlements until the mouths of Rivers Old and Argeş, in the Bărăgan Plain, in the Vlăsia Forests. In the Buzău Country, in the Vrancea County, and in the South of Moldavia.

Thus, after making strained efforts for more than a decade, for the praise of God and for the triumph of the Christianity on the land of our country, the venerable Metropolitan Paternus peacefully yielded his soul in the hands of Christ.

METROPOLITAN VALENTINIAN
Of Tomis
(Century VI)

The last known hierarch and spiritual shepherd from Tomis Metropolitanate, before the big migration of the Avars, of the Slavs, and of the Bulgarians, that took place in the year 602, he was Archi bishop Valentinian. According to his name he was Latin, namely Dacian-Roman, probably born and educated in the Tomis Eparchy, which he reached to lead around the middle of the Century VI. The first mention about him dates from the year 595 and it was made in a letter wrote by deacons Rusticus and Sebastianus, who account to him about the condemnation by Emperor Justinian, in the year 544, of the "Three Chapters", namely of the writings belonging to Bishops: Theodore of Mopsuestia († 428), Theodoret of Cyr († 458), and Ibas of Edessa († 457), which were reckoned as heretic. Archbishop Valentinian wrote to Pope Vigilius, who answered back on 18th of March, the year 550, addressing him as

"dialectissimo fratri Valentiniano, episcopo de Tomis, provinciae Scythiae" (To all-chosen brother Valentinian, the Bishop of Tomis from Scythia Province – Dobrogea, assuring him that he hadn't written anything against the four Ecumenical Synods and that he invited him to Constantinople to convince himself of that. Due to unknown reasons, Archbishop Valentinian didn't answer that invitation and he didn't participate to the Fifth Ecumenical Synod held on 5th of May in the year 553.

Under the venerable Metropolitan Valentinian, the Church of Christ from Pontic Dacia (Dobrogea) lived its most flourishing epoque from the period of the forming of the Romanian people, having churches and priests in every village, having famous monastic settlements, having missionary priests and monks spread on a wide area in the Dacian situated at north of River Danube. And on the other bank of the River Danube, there were in the Century VI several monastic communities in the sub-Carpathian area, among which the strongest were situate in the Buzău Mountains and in Vrancea Mountains. It is supposed even the existence of a bishopric in Vrancea Country which later on became the Milcovia Bishopric.

At the end of the sixth decade, after a fruitful evangelical activity, Metropolitan Valentinian moved to the eternal life.

SAINTS AND PIOUS
From the Centuries VII-XII

PIOUS DAMIAN AND PIOUS JOSHEP
The Monastic Settlement from Basarabi – Constanţa[89]
(Centuries IX-X)

In the year 1957 was discovered in a limestone hill in the commune Basarabi, Constanţa Country, a monastic settlement of hermits, dating from the Dacian-Roman and medieval époques (Centuries IV-XI), composed of six small cave-churches, which are unique in our country until now. Of course, in the area probably were more small-churches and monastic caves, some of them already destroyed in time, others still undiscovered, which formed a true "Lavra of the caves" in Pontic Dacia.

Due to the fact that the monastic compound from Basarabi is near to the "borders of the Cassian lands and of the Caves", where the birthplace of Saint John Cassian was, one can deduce that in the Tomis Eparchy, namely within the perimeter bordered by Constanţa – Cernavodă – Medgidia and Histria, there was the biggest monastic and hermits' settlement from Scythia Minor. Around the big organized monasteries having theological schools, which produced the famous Scythian monks during the Centuries IV-VI, there were also tens of caves and cave-churches, today disappeared, in which there were living in ascesis the great Dacian-Roman hermits who love the quietude. Like the hermitages from the Nile Valley, which were led not by abbots but by "presbyters", namely by the hieromonks who were spiritual guides and who officiated the Holy Mysteries for the monks, we believe that also the monastic compound from Basarabi was spiritually advised by such spiritual guides (Priests).

Two of these souly fathers of the hermits from Basarabi, recently discovered, they were "Damian the Priest" and "Josheph the Priest". Thei names are carved in the walls of the Little-Church B4. Lo a few of these inscriptions translated from the old Slavonic language: "I *Dimian* (Damian) *the priest I walk on a road, I light up candles for my sins… man, in this church, and may God have mercy on you together with the Holy Fathers. Amen. Dimian* (month) *May*. Another inscription: "The priest came to this place… in October the 4th. He came to us… I wrote… January". Another inscription: "*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, the unworthy servant Simeon bowed down for the first time in the church, in August the 3rd.* Simeon was probably a local clerk, or a monk who came to worship here. In the Greek language it is written: "*Lord, help Your servant Joseph (The priest)"*. Another inscription: "*The month of March, indiction IO*" (the year 982).

The other five little-churches are much smaller, having a rectangular shape, with the dimensions of ca. 6 x 2 x 2 meters; they were carved in limestone, are near to one another, and some of them have small annex chambers, for the monks living in ascesis. On their walls there are numerous

[89] Barnea, *The Christian Art in Romania*, tome II, Bucharest, 1981, pp. 46-90; *From River Danube to the Black Sea*, pp. 134-140; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, pp. 153-156.

runic inscriptions, many of them still undeciphered, crosses, paleo-Christian symbols, and traditional Dacian figures. In the little-church B1 is written with old Slavonic letters: "The year 650" (992).

The Pious Damian the Priest and the Pious Joseph the Prist were two hieromonks among the most distinguished ones, who led the community of the hermits from Basarabi, probably during the centuries IX-X. The first one seems to had been Damian, and then followed Joseph. Both of them were priests and confessors of this monastic settlement. They officiated the Holy Mysteries, they received and formed monks, they took the confessions, they imparted each of the monks with the Body and with the Blood of the lord, and they visited the monks at their caves and monastic cells. Due to the holiness of their lives, and due to the honor that they enjoyed, their disciples carved their names on the walls of the little-church from the middle, which probably was the spiritual center of this hermitage from Dobrogea.

Lord. Count in the group of the saints all the monks who lives in ascesis in these holy places.

SAINT GREGORY OF DECAPOLIS
From Bistrița to Vâlcea (20th of November)
(Centuries VIII-IX)[90]

a. His Life

Saint Gregory, whose holy relics are preserved intact at Bistrița Monastery from Vâlcea County, was born around the year 780, in Isauria – Asia Minor, to devoted Orthodox parents, called Serge and Mary. He lived his childhood in one of the ten cities of Auria, Irenopolis, and that's why he has been called up to these days as "of Decapolis".

At that time the Byzantium was stricken by the iconoclastic heresy, so that the Blessed Gregory, after finishing his studies, he renounced to marry and entered the monastic ascesis, and he struggled much for defending the Orthodoxy and for honoring the icons in Constantinople. In Asia Minor, and in Macedonia. Living in deep ascesis by fasting and by praying, he defeated all the traps of the unsee devils and he was found worthy of being bestowed the gift of working wonders and of foreseeing.

During his last years he lived in ascesis in the Saint Mina Monastery, near Thessaloniki, being found worthy of receiving the Mystery of the Priesthood. There too he worked many miracles and healings, heralding the future things. Renown all over Byzantium for the holiness of his life, at his old age, Saint Gregory of Decapolis got ill with dropsy and he moved to Christ on 20th of November 842, being buried at a monastery from Constantinople.

[90] Bishop Damascene of Severin, in *Romanian Saints*, p. 248; *Hagiographical Dictionary*, p. 339; *The Menaion*, on November the 20th.

This great Pious and witness of Christ was honored as a saint and as a miracle worker while he was still alive. But also, after his death, ill people got healed by coming at his tomb. By seeing that, the monks of that monastery unburied his unrotten relics from the ground and they displayed those for everybody to be able to see them and to worship them and to get help from them.

In the year 1453, because Byzantium fell under Turks, the holy relics of Saint Gregory were brought in the county from around River Danube, as they ended in the hands of a Turkish merchant. Hearing about the miracles worked by these holy relics, the ruler of the Romanian Country, Barby Craiovescu, he bought them at a high price, around the year 1498, and he sent them to Bistriţa Monastery – Râmnicu Vîlcea, which was founded by him, where these holy relics are today. The silver tabernacle, which these jewelries of great price are preserved with sanctitude, it was worked at Braşov, in the year 1656.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Saint Gregory of Decapolis was chosen by God to witness Christ and the right-faith on earth, where he was still in his mother's womb. His heart was wounded for the heavenly realities, when he was still a child, and his soul hadn't had rest in the torrent of the worldly worries. That's why, by renouncing to marry, he engaged himself with Christ in order to live together with Him for eternity.

2. Entering the ascesis of the monastic life, Saint Gregory aspired to two things, which not Christian can be saved without. In the first place, he was searching to remove his evil thoughts and to get deified by praying, by fasting, and by taking vigils, by reading the Holy Scripture, by humbleness, and by love. Then he wanted to confess the dogmas of the right-faith and to defend the Orthodoxy against all sort of heresies which were striking the Church of Christ. Helped by the grace of the Holy Ghost, in a short while he overcame the temptations of the youth and all the traps of the enemy devil. Then, the Holy Gospel and the teaching of the godlike Fathers strengthened his faith and prepared him like a soldier of Christ, for entering the spiritual battle against the iconoclastic blasphemers, who were destroying the holy relics and the holy icons, and who called all of those as idols.

3. With so much strength he openly resisted the iconoclasts, by defending the icons, that he went from place to place, from monastery to monastery, from Constantinople to Asia Minor, from Decapolis to Thessaloniki, and then to Rome, to Sicily, and then back to Thessaloniki. Everywhere he defended the Orthodox cult of the holy icons, teaching, encouraging, rebuking, and sometimes enduring beatings, persecutions, and death threats, for the honoring of the holy icons. But the good soldier of Christ didn't' fear those who can kill the body, neither did he listen to the blasphemies of the heretics, but he was teaching everybody that "the honor we give to the holy icons is rising to their first image", according to the teaching of Saint Basil the Great. Namely, by honoring and by bowing down in front of the icons, we honor and worship the Savior and the saints painted on icons. Then he was teaching that the First

One making an icon was the Father Himself Who gave birth to His Son "before all ages", for the Son of God is the icon of His Father. He was teaching that also the man created by God is the image, namely he is the icon of the All-Holy Trinity, according to the word from *Genesis* (1: 6): "Let's make man in the image and in the likeness of Us". The honor we give to the Son is equally rising also to the other Two Persons of the All-Holy Trinity, and the honor we gave to the icons is rising to the Savior Himself and to the saints painted on the icons.

4. As he was toiling to defend the Orthodox icons and dogmas, Saint Gregory of Decapolis had been living, in the same time, a highly spiritual life. For that, reaching him a chosen vessel of the Holy Ghost, he received the gifts of working miracles and of knowing the future. We are going to mention here some of his numerous miracles worked by him during his life.

4.1. During a night, while he was praying to God within his heart, he fell into ecstasy and he saw shining on the sky a light like the sun, surrounding their cave and the place from around it, followed by a good fragrance which filled up the monastic cell and the heart of the Pious. That light and that fragrance lasted for several days.

4.2. Reaching the measure of the consummation, God didn't keep this light under the bushel. Once, while he was praying, he heard a voice from above: "Gregory, it you want to reach the consummation, leave your land and your relatives and estrange yourself for your benefit of for the benefit of those who need your teaching". Since that our, Pious Gregory left the quietude of the wilderness and he was helping the world on the path to salvation.

4.3. Once, he wanted to sail to Italy, but the captain of the ship hadn't wanted to depart, because of fearing the pirates. Then the saint told to the sailors: "Dare, for God will protect you and you won't suffer any evil". Really so, they traveled well, without anu danger, for the hand of the Lord was with Saint Gregory.

4.3. Many people possessed by unclean ghosts were healed with the prayer of Saint Gregory. Thus, a woman, having an unclean ghost, she was delivered only by the Saint Gregory's word. On other occasion, Saint Gregory saw a man tormented by the devil, and he prayer for that man, saying: "Lord, have mercy on Your creature and do not allow him to be possessed by the devil". And after these words the devil immediately ran away from that man. But the Pious Gregory, because of seeing that the people are searching for him and they were praising him, he ran away from that place. Some other time, a diabolized man jumped on the back of the Pious and he was mocking the Pious. But the Blessed one, by praying from his heart, he banished away the devil from that man.

4.4. A poor woman who was also a widow, because her house had been destroyed, she asked the Saint for alms so that she could build another house for her, and he told her: "Woman, go and start the work, and the God of the poor will send you help!". The widow started digging the foundation and she found tar, which he sold and so he paid for the building of her house and for buying the things necessary to her for making a living.

4.5. O hermit monk living nearby, he was working with his hands and praying with his mouth. And Saint Gregory, by knowing that the end of the live of that hermit was near, he told him: “Brother, leave the work of the hand and take care of your soul, because the end of your live is near, and you will travel on a foreign road which you have never traveled before on!”. And after a few days, that hermit yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord.

4.6. A hieromonk called Theodulus came to Pious Gregory and asked him to tell him a useful word. When Theodulus was about to leave, Saint Gregory told him: “Go in peace and tell to your spiritual father to prepare his tomb, because he will soon leave for the Lord!”. After a few days, that old man passed away with peace.

4.7. A man who had been having fever for several years secretly acme to the monastic cell of Saint Gregory and he put on the Saint’s coat while being shaken with fever, and he was immediately healed.

4.8. Another man, because of having caught a cold, he was praying the Pious to heal him up, but the Pious didn’t wanted to heal him. Then the ill man hid himself, with great faith, into the bed of the Saint Gregory. Finding that man in his bed, Saint Gregory told him to leave from there. But that old man told to Saint Gregory: “I won’t get up from your bed, father, until you heal me!”. Then the Pious touched that ill man and that man got quickly healed and got up from the saint’s bed.

4.9. Once and for several times, while speaking with his teacher, the disciple of Saint Gregory saw fire coming out of the mouth of Saint Gregory, a fire that lightened up his face like a sun. So, the disciple fell to the feet of the Saints and begged him to unveil to him that wonderful mystery. The Pious told to his disciple: “This is produced by your faith, my son, because I know that I am a sinner. But if the man cleaned himself of the passions of his body and of his soul and if he became clean and worthy of receiving the Holy Ghost, then, as Christ said, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost came and dwell within the man. Then the man no longer speaks, but God Who dwells within that man is speaking. So, you too, my son, if you strive to clean yourself of the passions of your body and of your soul, and if you cut with the sword of the Ghost the thorns of your passions, and if you pray perseveringly to God in order Himself to born down with His godlike fire the matter of your passions and for Him to multiply within your soul the fruits of the good deeds, then you will become a clean and holy dwelling place of God, and your words will shine by the power and by the light of the Holy Ghost”.

4.10. After the move to heavens of Saint Gregory of Decapolis, and after the Byzantium fell into the hands of the Turks, his honored holy relics ended in the hands of a Turkish merchant. The Pious governor of Craiova, Barbu Craiovescu, heard about these holy relics and about the countless miracles worked by them, so that he spent a great among of money and, in the year 1498 he brought the holy relics of Saint Gregory of Decapolis to Bistriţa-Vîlcea Monastery, which was funded by him, so that everybody to benefit of their comforting.

The tradition tells us that the Turkish merchant sold the holy relics in exchange for gold coins, equally to the weight of the holy relics. But, with the prayers of the Saint, his holy relics weighed less and the Turk merchant didn't receive as much money as he wanted. Later on, the Turk realizing that he was deceived by Christians, he came to the Bistriţa-Vîlcea Monastery, intending to take the holy relics back or him to be given more money. Then the blessed founder of the Monastery, who meanwhile became here a monk bearing the name Pachomius, hearing about the coming of the Turk merchant, he hid the holy relics in a cave from a nearby mountain, where it was erected a little chapel in the honor of Saint Gregory. So, the Saint's relics escaped the hands of the pagans. But the Turkish merchant got angry and ordered the monastery to be pillaged and set in fire, and then he left for his country. But the founder rebuilt the monastery and he brought back from the cave the holy relics of Saint Gregory, which have been preserved until these days in the big church, as a very precious jewelry. Only at time of great danger the holy relics were hidden in the mentioned cave.

4.11. During the five centuries of existence of the holy relics of Saint Gregory of Decapolis in our country, there have been worked many miracles and healings of illnesses, but which in time have been forgotten. Among the few recorded in writing, we are going to mention in the followings a few miracles worked especially during our days.

4.11.1. According to an old Orthodox tradition, during times of danger and of big drought, clergy and people went in processions through cities, through villages, and on the agricultural fields, bearing the holy relics of Saint Gregory of Decapolis, and with miracle-working icons. The holy relics were brought out especially during the summer, in the Romanian Country and especially in Oltenia, when it was drought, and, by the prayers of the Pious, the Lord sent early and later rain. The oldest procession for rain bearing the holy relics of Saint Gregory, recorded in the Romanian Country, it took place in the summer of the year 1765. In that year the stricken by drought harvests were saved and the right-believer people was delivered from death.

4.11.2. In the summer of the year 1913, on the patron-day of Bistriţa Monastery, there was brought to the holy relics of Saint Gregory a young woman who had palsy in her of both legs. Being touched with the holy relics, and being the Holy Unction being performed upon her for three times, and after three weeks passed, she came to the monastery on her own legs to give thanks to Saint Gregory for her healing.

4.11.3. In the year 1920, a woman called Mary, originating from the Village Cacova – Vîlcea, she fell off a tree and she had the whole her body paralyzed, and she was brought, after a few days form her accident, unconscious, to the monastery to the holy relics of Saint Gregory. Being performed upon her the Holy Unction, the ill woman opened her eyes widely, she came to her senses, and she asked for being raised on her feet, and then she turned back healed to her house, by the prayers of Saint Gregory the miracle-worker.

4.11.4. In the summer of the year 1925, a young man from Commune Sirineasa – Vîlcea went to see the holy relics of Saint Gregory, because of being the young man possessed by an evil ghost. Touching the holy tabernacle, and being performed the Holy Unction upon him daily, after seven days he went home healed, to his family.

4.11.5. In the summer of the year 1927 there was a big drought, so that the holy tabernacle was carried in procession through villages. The owner of the lumber mill from Brezoi – a nonbeliever boyar – didn't want to allow his workers to attend the procession. But the prayers for rain were still done and, by the mediation of the Pious Gregory, God gave a good rain on the Olt Valley. But on the same day, the Lord punished the evil and nonbeliever boyar, because his factory caught fire and burnt to the ground.

4.11.6. Being drought, in the summer of the year 1935, the holy tabernacle was carried in procession through the Villages of Băbeni, Ioneşti, and Orleşti. When passing by a water well, the tabernacle of Saint Gregory suddenly stopped. Then the priests ordered that water well to be examined, and the people drew out the whole water from it, and they found there the body of a small child who was, probably, thrown there by a killer woman. After the body of the little child was buried, the holy relics departed immediately from there.

4.11.7. In the Village Băileşti-Dolj, in the year 1932, there lived a Christian woman called Elena, who had been paralyzed from her youth. Hearing that the holy relics of Saint Gregory were brought in procession for rain, she wanted to be brought to church to worship the relics. After she touched the holy tabernacle of the Pious, she asked to be placed under the table which the holy relics were placed upon. For three hours as the religious service was going on, the Christian Elena prayed secretly, asking, with many tears, for healing and forgiveness. After the priests and the believers left in procession for the agricultural fields, carrying the holy relics of Saint Gregory, the ill woman got definitively healed of her palsy, and she turned back home and live for another 20 years.

4.11.8. In the summer of the year 1934 there was a big drought so that there were made prayers and processions carrying the holy relics of Saint Gregory from Bistriţa Monastery to the Village Lungeşti – Vîlcea. While the procession was crossing through the middle of the village, the peasants were holding torches and they were throwing flowers in front of the tabernacle; then a mother came and brought her daughter who was 4 years old and suffering of epilepsy. After the little girl touched the tabernacle with her forehead, she was healed. The child grew up and became a good mother and Christian. Her name was Elena.

4.11.9. Sophia Patrichi, a pensioner woman from Bucharest, got ill in the year 1957 with an infection to her face, suspected of cancer, which seemed unhealable. She heard about the miracles worked by Saint Gregory from Bistriţa, she ran to his holy relics, she touched the tabernacle with faith and

with tears, and she prayer much, asking for health. ON the second day, when we woke up, she had no trace of infection on her face, and even the cataract she had in her eye was healed too[91].

Holy All-Pious Father Gregory, pray to God for us!

SAINT PARASCHEVA FROM IASI
Celebrated on 14th of October
(Century XI)[92]

a. Her Life

The All-Pious our Parascheva, called also as "the New One", from Iasi, "the enlightener of Moldavia" and the praise of the entire Orthodoxy, she was born in the Epivat Village from Easter Thrace, not far from Constantinople, around at the beginning of the century XI, to rightly-believer and noble parents.

The two children, Euthimius and Parascheva, received in their family a chosen education and religious education. Thus, Euthimius, the older brother of Saint Paracheva, he entered the monastic ascesis before her. Then, due to the holiness of his life, he reached to be Bishop of Matidia and he shepherded well the Church of Christ until the end of his life. Likewise, Saint Parascheva love Christ more than anything, so that at the age of 15 she entered a monastery of virgins form the Pontic Heraclea. After five years, she consecrated herself to the Lord's Tomb and she lives there, in ascesis, in a small monastery of hermit nuns from Jordan Valley.

At the age of 25, by taking commandment from the angel of the Lord, she turned back to her country and she lived in ascesis near to the church from her natal village, Epivat. Around the middle of the Century XI, when she was 27, the Pious Parascheva yielded her soul in the Lord's hands and she was buried near to the sea shore. Later on, after some miracles, the holy relics of the Pious Parascheva were found whole in the ground and they were placed in the church of Saint Apostles from Village Epivat to be honored and worshipped. There her holy relics were preserved for 175 years.

In the year 12243, the Romanian-Bulgarian Tzar John Asan II (1218-1241) moved the holy relics of Saint Parascheva to Trnovo, which was back then the Capital City of Bulgaria, were they were placed in the Cathedral having as patron the Dormition of the Mother of the Lord. Later on, the Blessed Patriarch Euthimius of Bulgaria wrote *The Life of Pious Parascheva* and he inscribed her in the Synaxarion of the Church having as celebration day the 14th of October. Since the second half of the Century XIV, the cult of Saint

[91] These healings and miraculous deeds done by the holy relics of Saint Gregory of Decapolis from Bistrița Monastery, have been gathered together and put in a slam volume by the Nun Olga Gologan († 1972), who was the abbot of Bistrița Monastery.

[92] *The Menaion* on 14th of October; *Hagiographical Dictionary*, p. 642; *Romanian Saints*, p. 258.

Parascheva reached also the North of River Danube, in the three Romanian Countries.

At Trnovo the holy relics of All-Pious Parascheva were kept for 160 years. In the year 1393, because Bulgaria fell under the occupation of the Turks, her holy relics were gifted for a little while to Mircea the Old who was the voivode of the Romanian Country. After three years, the Turks gave the relics back to Anghelina of Serbia who was the queen of Serbia, and she placed them in Belgrade where they remained for 125 years.

In the year 1521 the Turks occupied Serbia and they again took hostage the holy relics of Saint Parascheva, and they took them to the sultan's palace from Constantinople. Then, her holy relics were redeemed by the Ecumenical Patriarchy for 12.000 gold ducats and they were placed in the Patriarchal Cathedral from Fanar for 120 years. But in the year 1641, because the Patriarchy of Constantinople reached to owe big sums of money to the Turkish Empire, for the unpaid taxes, Patriarch Parthenius bestowed the holy relics of Pious Parascheva, as a sign of gratitude, to the rule of Moldavia, Vasile Lupu, who paid and covered all the debts of the Patriarchies from Constantinople and from Jerusalem, for several years.

In the year 1641, on 13th of June, the holy relics of All-Pious our mother Parascheva reached to Iasi, and they were placed with much honor in the beautiful church then built of the Monastery of the Three Hierarchs. The holy relics staid there until 26th of December 1888, when they miraculously escaped the fire and, after that, they were transferred to the new metropolitan cathedral from Iasi, where they have been kept until these days.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Three were the great virtues which adorned the soul and the life of Saint All-Pious our mother Parascheva from Iasi: the angelic virginity, the giving of alms – namely the rejection of the earthly things, and the godlike prayer that is the mother of all the good things. These three virtues she loved from her blessed childhood and by these virtues, especially, she disrobed herself of any earthly thought, she defeated the devils, and she was counted in the group of the bearers-of-God Saints.

2. Being the offspring of a noble family and having sown in her heart the fear of God, the Blessed Parascheva started her spiritual ascension on the ladder of the virtue, towards Christ, her Bridegroom, in the first place through the holy prayer, which is the beginning of all the good things. Since her childhood, the Pious was attending the church if her village Epivat, not missing any of the religious services, and in the house of her parents she was praying much, day and night, imitating the holy angels.

3. But because the prayer without love for the neighbor cannot reach to God "Who is love", the Blessed Parascheva added to her prayers two more good deeds: the fasting and the giving of alms. This is for the fasting gives wings to the prayer and elevated it to heavens, and the giving of alms, which is the first daughter of the love, it brings the prayer in front of the throne of the Holy

Trinity. Thus, the bride of Christ was not eating anything until evening, on the fasting days; and on feast days, when she came back from the church, she often changed her good and expensive clothes, bough for her by her parents, for the worn out and torn clothes of the poor children who were asking for alms at the church's door. For that Pious Parascheva received insults, rebukes, and beatings from her mother, because of seeing her dressed up in ugly and poor clothes.

"-Tell me, Parascheva, whom have you given to your expensive and beautiful clothes which I have dressed you up with? Was she asked by her upset mother.

- I bestowed them to Christ through the hands of the poor children! The Blessed Parascheva answered, with an enlightened face."

4. Once, listening to the religious service in the church, she heard being read this word from the Holy Gospel: "Anyone who wants to follow Me, let him reject himself, take his cross, and follow Me" (Mk. 8: 34). So, being her wounded in her soul, like by an arrow, by this word of Christ, she immediately forsook the worldly worries and, by secretly leaving her parental house at the age of only 12, she entered the holy ascesis of the monastic life. After she first bowed herself down in the Blachernae Church (of the Vlachs), as also in all the monasteries and at all the holy relics from Constantinople, she hid herself as a stranger in a monastery of virgins from Pontic Heraclea.

5. For five years the Blessed Parascheva live in ascesis there, getting consummate in all the good deeds, and especially in the ceaseless prayer with many tears, with harsh fasting and with nigh vigils. Here she crossed the difficult path of passions removal, and she started the difficult spiritual ascension of the consummation, by mysteriously uniting herself with the Bridegroom Christ through the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. All the sisters from that monastery were amazed by her life and wisdom, and there were praising God, saying:

"- Glory to You, Lord, for You have made a chosen and holy vessel the Pious virgin Parascheva and for You are extolled among the gentle and humble in heart!"

6. By cleaning on herself of the earthly things, the Pious Parascheva went to Jerusalem and, after a while, she withdrew herself on the Jordan Valley, to a small monastery of virgins. There she lived in a harsher ascesis for almost ten years, defeating the devils and praying for the world. Her good deeds which she was defeating the unseen enemy and which she was uniting herself in an untold manner with Christ were: the consummate cleanness of her mind and of her heart of passionate thoughts and imaginations, the ceaseless prayer with tears of joy, the fasting and the vigil for the whole night, and the unsleeping desire for the all-beloved Bridegroom. All of these crowned Saint Parascheva with the crown of the consummation into Christ, so that she was shining like a lit torch among the other ascetic nuns.

7. Reaching the age of 25, the Pious heard during one night when praying, an angel of the lord telling her:

"- Leave this wilderness and this place and turn to Epivat in your country, for there you owe to leave your body to the earth and you to leave this world towards God Whom you have been loving!"

So, Saint Parascheva kissed good bye all the sisters from that monastery, she bowed down to the Lord's Tomb from Jerusalem and, by embarking herself on a ship, she went to Constantinople. There she again bowed down, with tears, in the Church of the Mother of the lord from Blachernae, saying:

"- All Holy Lady Master, I don't have other hope and shelter than You. You be my guide and helper towards Christ. While I have been living in ascesis, in the wilderness, I have had You as my helper and comforter, and now, as I have turned myself back into the world, I have no other hope than you, after God!"

8. After Saint Parascheva lived in ascesis for two more full years, near to the church from Epivat, in hidden spiritual ascesis and, feeling her end near, she kneeled down in front of the icon of the Savior and with tear in her eyes she uttered this prayer:

"- Lord Jesus Christ, look at me from Your dwelling place and do not forsake me, neither leave me, for I have left, for Your holy name, all the worldly things, and I have been traveling towards You for the whole my life. And, now, have mercy on me, Lord, and tell to Your gentle angel to take my soul in peace!"

While she was praying, All-Pious Parascheva yielded her holy soul in the hands of the Lord, and her much toiled body was buried by Christians in a new tomb, near to the seashore.

9. Many years later, the holy relics of Pious Parascheva were discovered by the will of God as whole, in the tomb, and they were brought to light towards the comforting of the believers. Dying, a sailor was washed ashore by the sea waves. Then, a merciful Christian called George, they dug up a tomb nearby and they found the non-putrid and full of good fragrance body of Saint Parascheva. But, because they didn't know who she was, they buried next to her the stinking body of the sailor. But at night, the merciful Christian saw in their dream an emperor sitting on a lightened throne surrounded by angels. And one of those angels told him:

"- Gheorghe, why didn't you take away the body of Saint Parascheva, and you left if there, like that? Don't you know that God loved her beauty and He wanted to extoll her on earth?"

Then, that holy Empress told him:

"- In a hurry, you take my body from that tomb and place it in an honorable place, in the church of my village Epivat!"

Hearing about this miracle, the clerics immediately went to the tomb of Pious Parascheva, with candles and with incense, and they brought her body in the Church of Saint Apostles from Epivat, where her relics were kept for 175 years, and they worked countless miracles and healings of illnesses.

10. Being spread in all Balkan countries the news about the life and the miracles of Pious Parascheva from Epivat, in the year 1235 her holy relics were

moved to Trnovo, the capital city of the Romanian-Bulgarian Empire, where they worked miracles as well. After 160 years her holy relics were moved to Belgrade, and after another 125 years they were sized by Turks who sold them again to the Patriarchy of Constantinople, where they were honored with much piousness by believers.

11. In the year 1639, the Voivode of Moldova, Vasile Lupu, after he finished the building of the beautiful church of the Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery, he was looking for endowing his foundation and the capital city of his country with the holy relics of some miracle-workers saints. So, by praying to God, he heard about the renown holy relics of Saint Parascheva. And, as the merciful voivode paid to the Turks the debts of the Patriarchy of Constantinople, in the summer of the year 1841, Patriarch Parthenius of Constantinople bestowed to Voivode Vasile Lupu, as sign of gratitude, the most precious jewelry he had: the holy relics of Pious Parascheva. The holy relics were transported by ship to Galati, and from there they were accompanied by numerous clerics, monks and believers, bearing torches. Near to Iasi they were welcomed by Voivode Vasile Lupu and by Metropolitan Barlaam, together with all the clergy and the government of the country, and they placed the holy relics into, with great honor, in the church of the Three Hierarchs Monastery, in 13th of June 1841, in the sound of the bells and in the harmony of the beautiful churchly songs.

12. Countless are the miracles and the healings of illnesses done to the believers who ran with prayers and with tears to the holy relics of Holy All-Pious our mother Paracheva from Iasi, during the 350 years since she protects Moldova and our country. Let's mention here only a few of them.

12.1. The greatest wonder worked by Saint Parascheva is itself extolling of her by the fact that her body hasn't rotten, that she heals illnesses, and that she delivers the believers from many needs and dangers. Due to this fact, she has been chosen as their protector by all Orthodox countries from Balkans. And even the Turks were persuaded by the wonders done to Christians who asked her for help with faith and piousness.

12.2. Another miracle that amazed Moldova and our country was the fact that her holy relics escaped unharmed the fire ignited in the night of the 26-27 of December 1888, in the chapel of the Saint Three Hierarchs Monastery from Iasi. For, despite the catafalque of the saint caught fire, and so the silver of the tabernacle got melted, the wood and the holy relics, though engulfed in embers, they remained whole and unscathed, towards the strengthening and the bewilderment of the doubters.

12.3. Towards the end of the Century XIX, the wife of the priest Gheorghe Lateş from Rădăşeni Commune – Suceava was suffering of an incurable illness in her brain. She ran to Saint Parascheva and she prayer with tears to her holy relics, and she askes the Saint for helping her. Then the Holy

Unction was done upon her and she turned home. At night, Saint Parascheva appeared to her as in reality, in white and shiny clothes, and she told her:

"- Stop crying, for from now on you have been healed!"[93]

The next day that woman woke up healed and she praised her benefactress.

12.4. In the year 1950, a young woman from Iasi was diagnosed with leukemia. Then, she and her parents ran to Saint Parascheva and with many tears they asked her for help and healing. After two months of persevering prayers and of Holy Unction, the young woman got healed of that incurable illness and she continued her studies.

12.5. A woman living in a village near to Iasi was severely ill. Being admitted to the hospital and waiting for her surgery, she went first to pray Saint Parascheva, asking her for healing, with faith and tears. Three days after she was admitted into hospital her analyzes came out in good order. The medics told her:

"- You can go home, you are healthy."

12.6. In the year 1968, on the celebration day of Pious Parascheva, a Christian woman from Iasi was preparing canned vegetables for winter. Her mother urged her:

"- Daughter, stop doing that, because today is the day of Saint Parascheva!

- Mother, the daughter answered to her, on each day there is a saint, but I have no time to celebrate all of them!"

After an hour, that woman sent her daughter to the city for buying something. While on the street that girl was hit by a car and admitted to the hospital in a grave condition. The mother of the girl ran, on the next day, to Saint Parascheva and, after admitting her sin, she asked, with tears, for forgiveness and for her daughter to be healed. After three more days, the girl turned back home healthy.

12.7. An engineer who was ill in his lungs was admitted to the hospital for surgery. His mother went to the holy relics of Pious Parascheva and asked her, with faith, to heal her son. For two weeks the doctors postponed the surgery. Then, they noticed that the pulmonary lesions had healed miraculously. Then they told to the patient:

"- Mister engineer, you have escaped the surgery. Turn back home, for you are healed. There is somebody praying to God for you!".

12.8. A little child who was tree and a half year old, he suddenly stopped speaking. Then his mother took him in her arms and went to ask Saint Parascheva for help. While the woman was praying, suddenly the little child shouted out:

"- Mother, mother! Lord, Lord is here!"

[93] On this healing Bishop Melchisedec of Roman wrote in details in his book *The Life and the Miracles of Pious Our Mother Parascheva*, Bucharest, 1889; see also the *Menaion* on 14th of October.

Thanking with the full heart to All-Pious Parascheva, that mother turned back home with her healthy child.

12.9. In the year 1955, two husbands from Iasi didn't get along so well. On an evening, the despaired woman left the house. Her husband and her daughter searched for her to no avail. Then, after the daughter went to bed, the father ran to Saint Parascheva and prayer her with tears for his wife to return home. The husband went home and an hour later his wife came home too. She had a pale face and she was preoccupied.

"- Where have you been, wife? What has happened to you? the husband asked her.

- The devil gave me the thought to commit suicide. That's why I sat on the rail near to Nicolina rail station. But it was eight in the evening what a train was coming at a great speed, and I saw our daughter, dressed up in white clothes, and she grabbed me by my hand and pulled me away from the rail. So, I have escaped the death and the damnation of the hell. After I recovered my strength, I thanked God for delivering me of this awful sin, and I have turned home.

- You know, our daughter has been asleep since eight o'clock, and I have been praying for you. That one who saved you was not our daughter, but it was herself Saint Parascheva. Let's thank her for saving you from that awful and twofold death, both bodily and souly!".

Since that evening there was harmony and spiritual joy in that Christian family.

12.10. During the two world wars, the Iasi City was protected against bombings, and the Metropolitan Cathedral, where the holy relics of Saint Parascheva are preserved, it escaped unscathed. This was for the Pious Parascheva has been protecting Moldova and the blessed Iasi City for 350 years. They old people say that the soldiers saw, at night, during the war, a huge woman dressed up in white, above Iasi City, protecting the city against occupation and bombings. So knows Saint Pious Parascheva to help her adoptive motherland, for the faith if its people!

12.11. During the big drought form the summer of the year 1947, when the people and the stock were dying of hunger, the holy relics of Saint Parascheva were carried in procession through the Moldavia's villages. The believers were waiting for them and they welcomed them with tears of joy and with torches. After the procession had passed, there came clouds of rich rain watering the land. As thanksgiving, the believers prayed and erected roadside crucifixes in honor of the crossing of the holy relics through their villages.

12. 12. The most who run to ask our Holy mother Parascheva for help, are the ill persons, the peasants, the monks, and the students. Especially during the examens sessions, the tabernacle of the Pious is full with handbooks, notebooks, and lists for remembrance. We can declare that the most beloved holy relics from our country are, without any doubt, the holy relics of Saint Parascheva who is called also as "quickly helper and much useful".

12. 13. The old fathers who were eyewitnesses confess that, on the day of her celebration, while people were waiting in line for bowing down in worshipping to the tabernacle containing the holy relics of Saint Parascheva, there came also two old Christian women from Focşani. Seeing so many people in line, they told to the guard-priest:

"- Father, allow us to bow down in worshipping to the Pious without staying in line, and to place under her head this new pillow brought by us from home as thanks for her help given us by her.

- May God bless you, Christian women, the priest told them. God and bow down in worshipping!".

On that instant the priests and the believers saw a totally holy and wonderful thing. The Pious raised her head by herself, and after the two women bowed down in worship, Saint Parascheva laid down as before. Lo how much Saint Parascheva loves those who pray to God and to His saints with humbleness and faith.

13. Saint Parascheva from Iasi enjoys in our country a special cult, more than any other local saints who have holy relics in Romania, on a daily basis, at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Iasi, since early in the morning and until late at night. There is a continuous pilgrimage, the all-ages believers coming from all quarters, to prayer, and especially on feast-days, in fasting periods, and on each Friday, which is reckoned as the "Day of the Holy Friday", namely of the Saint Parascheva. The believers come and bow down in worshipping before her tabernacle, with faith, bringing flowers, gifts, and clothing which they touch with the tabernacles of the Pious, in order they to receive help, health, and blessing.

But the biggest celebration day from the whole year is on 14th of October, when Saint Parascheva is celebrated, and when there takes place one of the biggest Orthodox pilgrimages form our country. This day is reckoned as a true national churchly pilgrimage, one that lasts for three days. Since the celebration's eve, her holy relics are brought out and placed in front of the Cathedral and for two days and for two nights the believers wait in line for worshipping her.

In the evening of the day of 14th of October, the celebration of the Pious comes to an end with an impressive procession around the Cathedral, having in its front the Metropolitan of Moldavia who, together with the clergy and with the believers, holding lit candles in their hands, they carry the tabernacle of the Saint, accompanied by the sound of the bells and of the beautiful churchly songs.

After the procession, the holy relics are placed again in the church, at their place, and it is song the Oratory of Saint Parascheva, and then all participants turn back to their home carrying within their hearts the joy of the great feast and the comforting of the Holy Ghost.

Saint All-Pious Mother Parascheva, pray to God for us!

SAINT DIMITRIUS THE NEW
From Bucharest – 27th of October
(Centuries XII-XII)[94]

a. His Life

The all-Pious our Father Dimitrius the New from Bucharest, also known as "Basarabov", he was born during the time of the Romanian-Bulgarian Emperors Peter and Ioni Asan (Centuries XII-XIII), a few kilometers far from the Rusciuc City, in a village inhabited by Vlachs, on the Valley of River Lom, to Orthodox parents who were loving Christ.

In the first place he was a caws shepherd, in his natal village. Then, because of loving the quietude and the monastic ascesis, he became a monk in a monastery situated on River Lom's Valley, not far from Basarabov locality. After a harsh hermit-like ascesis between two rocks situated on the River Lom's bank, the Pious Dimitrius yielded his soul in that place and nobody knew about that. After many years, his holy relics were discovered by God's Providence and they were brought into the church from Basarabov Village. Hearing about the miracles worked there, the voivodes of the Romanian Country wanted to bring his holy relics to Tîrgovişte. But the Saint didn't want to leave that palce, so that the Romanian voivodes built a new church in Basarabov Village, where his holy relics were sheltered for more than two hundred years.

During the Russian-Turkish war from Balkans (1769-1774), the Russian general Petru Salticov took the holy relics intending to take them to Russia. But due to the insistence of a good Romanian Christian, Hagi Dimitrie, the holy relics of Saint Dimitrius were bestowed to the Romanian Country and place with great honor in the Metropolitan Cathedral where they have been kept until today.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

b.1. Ever since he was a little child living with his parents, the Blessed Dimitrius was very zealous in praying, loving, especially, the church, the fasting, the silence, the humbleness, and the hermit-like life. Once, while he was shepherding the cows of Basarabov Village, he accidentally stepped on a bird nest and he killed the hatchlings. Rebuked by his conscience, he punished his guilty foot by not putting any shoe in it for three years, so that he walked barefoot during summer and winter, manly enduring the frost of the winter and the stones' hits.

2. In the community of the monastery situated on the Lom's Valley, the Blessed Dimitrius surpassed everyone by his clean prayer of the heart and by his gift of the tears. There was no other more loving of God and of spiritual ascesis living in that hermitage, than he was. He ate once in three days, he

[94] The *Menaion* on 27th of October; *The Hagiographical Dictionary*, p. 209; Archimandrite Ghesarie Gheorghescu, *Romanian Saints*, p. 272.

slept for very short time at night, he had not earthly wealth but his body tired by fasting and by prostrations, two old monastic coats, and the Book of Psalms. Due to his harsh ascesis all the monks from there benefited of his life and they strived to follow his example.

3. Fearing the precipice of the vain-gloriousness and wanting to follow the great hermits from wilderness, Pious Dimitrius, after taking blessing from the abbot, he left the community at night and he hid himself on the rocky valley of the Lom River, in a small and humid cave. There he lives for many years in unknown ascesis, in hunger, in needs, in thirst, and in torment, enduring temptations from the devils. Then, feeling his death near, he withdrew between two big rocks, and there, while praying, he peacefully left for the heavenly dwelling places, being counted in the group of the Pious Fathers.

4. Forgotten by his brothers from the monastery, the body of the Pious Dimitrius was kept hidden for a long time between the two big rocks, having his holy relics whole and unbroken. One time, when the river flooded the area, the two big rocks fell into the river taking with them the whole and unbroken holy relics of the saints. The holy relics pied in the water and in the sands for many years, until God unveiled them in a manner like this. It was a little girls possessed by an unclean ghost and she couldn't be healed by anybody. One night Saint Dimitrius appeared in her dream and told her:

"- Child, if your parents get me out of water, I will heal you!".

Hearing about that dream, the clergy and the people went to the place where the saints lived in ascesis and they got out of water the jewelry-of-great-price, namely the holy relics of Saint Dimitrius the New, which they placed, with honor, in the church of the Basarabov Village. Since that day, many ill people had been running to the holy relics of Saint Dimitrius the New and they received health and comforting. The first one being healed of the unclean ghost was even that child who dreamed the day before of his miraculous doctor.

5. Hearing the voivodes of the Romanian Country about the miracles worked by Saint Dimitrius of Basarabov , they sent priests and boyars to bring his beloved holy relics in the land of their country, but that wasn't possible, because the Saint didn't want to leave his natal land. Then they yoked two inexperienced oxen and let them go whatever they wanted in order to see where Saint Dimitrius wanted to go. Thus, the oxen immediately turned with their cart to Basarabov, where his holy relics remained for two more centuries, healing countless ills people and alleviating many human sufferings.

6. Lo some of the miracles worked at the holy relics of Saint Dimitrius, in Basarabov Village.

Two sisters, Aspra and Ecaterina, from Cernavodă Village, bowing down in worship in front of the Pious's holy relics, they secretly took a little piece of them, on the purpose of taking that piece back to their church. But after they got into their cart, the horses couldn't start pulling the cart, until the two sisters went and place that little piece back from where they took it, and they asked the Saint Dimitrius for forgiveness, in tears.

Some other time, Lavrentius, while bowing down in worshipping in front of the holy relics, he broke a hand of the Saint. He was punished on site, remaining with his mouth open and losing his voice. Only after many prayers with tears, he was forgiven and healed.

A pious bishop, paralyzed, called Ioanichie, was taken to Basarabov and placed next to the Saint's tabernacle. After being officiated the Holy Liturgy and several other prayers for health, Bishop Ioanichie stood up consummately healed and he gave praise to his benefactor.

7. During the Independence War, from the year 1877, an old colonel from Bucharest, had seven boys taken on the battle field. Their father was a believer, so that he praised with tears to the holy relics of Saint Dimitrius for the saints to escape his boys alive from war. Then he wrote the names of his boys on a piece of paper, and he secretly placed that piece of paper under the Saint's head. After the war ended, by the prayers of the miracle-worker Dimitrius, all the seven boys turned back to their homes.

8. During the German occupation from WWI, a few Bulgarians stole the holy relics of Saint Dimitrius from the Metropolitan Cathedral from Bucharest, on the purpose of taking those relics over River Danube, back to Bulgaria. But the saint didn't want to leave our country. That's why, for the whole night, the Bulgarians kept driving on Bucharest's streets, but without finding the road to Giurgiu, where the River Danube is crossed between Romanian and Bulgaria. In the morning, they were caught and the holy relics were brought back to their place.

9. In the year 1955, a woman living near Bucharest, had her husband paralyzed and mentally ill. No longer being her able to stand that, she came to Saint Dimitrius and asked for the advice of a priest. The priest gave her to read the Pious's akathists, and to bow down in worshipping, with faith, in front of the Pious's tabernacle. The woman went back home. Around midnight, her husband shouted after her and told her:

"- Have you called for a doctor from Bucharest, for me?

- No! she answered him.

- How can that be? Her husband told her. A few moments earlier a doctor came to me and consulted me. Why didn't you come and pay him? He got into a chariot with white horses and left for Bucharest.

- Did he consult you? the woman asked her husband.

- He anointed me with holy oil on my hand and on my paralyzed leg and he commanded me to no longer rebuke you or curse you, and I will be healed. Please forgive me, Mary, and I promise not to upset you anymore! But do not forget, go in the morning and pay that doctor, for you called him and you know where he lives!".

In the next morning the ill man stood completely healed, and his wife went crying to the holy relics of Saint Dimitrius and, with many tears, she thanked her benefactor.

10. At time of drought, at the request of the believers, the holy relics of the Pious were taken in procession, tarrying a day or two in reach village, and

the Holy Unction was officiated in the agricultural fields, everybody kissed the holy tabernacle, the sermon was uttered, all of them ate sitting on the grass, and then they left in procession for the neighboring villages, and leading the procession there was a young man bearing the Holy Cross. After him there followed two young men carrying the national flag, wide as the road was, and they were followed by the old men carrying religious flags, crosses, and flags, followed by the holy relics, and then followed the group of the believers, in the sound of the bells and carrying lit up candles, basil, and flowers.

After the religious service ended, or even during that religious service, by the will of God, there came a strong rain and watered the land stricken by drought, because of our sins.

Saint All-Pious Dimitrius, pray to God for us!

SAINT MARTYR PHILOTHEA
From Argeş – 7th of December
(Century XIII)[95]

This holy virgin and little lamb loved by Christ, was of a Romanian-Bulgarian origin, being born around the beginning of the Century XIII (ca. 1206), in Trnovo City, the former capital city of Bulgaria. Her father was an agricultural worker, and her mother, of Vlach origin, was housewife.

After providing her daughter with a chosen education and after she tied her with her heart to the love for Christ, the mother moved to the eternal life, leaving the little orphan girl in the care of her father. Her father married, later on, so that he left the Blessed Philothea in the care of her stepmother. As usual, the little girl was often persecuted, punished, and accused to her father, on the reason of disobedience, because of going to often to the church, because of wasting the house's wealth by giving alms to the orphan and poor children. Because of that, her father too rebuked her.

But virgin Philothea didn't get upset, neither she put at heart these temptations done to her by satan through the mediation of her stepmother, in order to determine her to stop doing the good things learnt by her form her mother. But, on the contrary, as she was growing up, Philothea was daily attending the church's religious services, she was sharing her good clothes and her food with the poor children whom she came across to, and at home she was praying and fasting. Three were her good deed crowning her: the prayer, the virginity, and the giving of alms.

When she was only 12 years old, God deigned to make the blessed virgin Philothea worthy of the crown of the martyrdom and of the holy of the heavenly kingdom, in a way like this. Being autumn, her father was working in the field, so that Philothea was sant daily, by her stepmother, to being food to her father,

[95] *The Menaion* on 7th of December; *The Hagiographical Dictionary*, p. 297; Bishop Gherasie from Vîlcea, *Romanian Saints*, p. 281.

in the field. But the blessed used to share a little food to the poor children whom she came across to. Her father noticed that he had not enough to eat, so he rebuked her wife because of that, but his wife told him:

"- Ask you daughter what does she do with the food, because I send you enough food to the field!".

Then the wicked father, getting angry with his daughter, he decided to spy her and see what she was doing with the food, so that on a given day, at noon, he hid himself in a bush and saw Philothea sharing the food she was bringing to him, with the poor children. Then the father got exceedingly angry, like a beast, and because of the urge of the devil, he threw the hatchet that he was wearing at his waist, at Saint Philothea, and he cut her on his leg, so that, in a short time, the Blessed one yielded her life in the hands of all-sweet her Bridegroom Jesus Christ. Thus, her father became her persecutor and killer because of her faith, according to the Gospel's word: "*and brother will give his brother to death and father his son"* (Mt. 10: 21).

Engulfed with fear and sorrow, he tried to pick up her holy body from the soil, but he couldn't, because the body of Saint Philothea became miracle-worker, and it became heavy like a big stone. Then, her unfortunate father ran to Archbishop of Trnovo and confessed his sin, and he told him everything that happened. The archbishop, with all the clergy and with a multitude of people went out the city carrying incense and candles, to pick up the extolled body of Saint Martyr Philothea and to bring it to the cathedral from that city. But due to divine order, her body didn't let them by any means to pick it up.

Seeing that isn't the will of Saint Philothea to remain in her motherland, the archbishop and the priests made many prayers to God and to the martyr, naming numerous monasteries, churches, and cathedrals from South and North of River Danube, in order they to see where she wanted her holy relics to be kept. But her body didn't become light. Finaly, they mentioned the Curtea de Argeş Monastery and, by godlike miracle, her body became lighter and they could pick it up and place it in a coffin towards being worshipped.

Understanding that the Holy Martyr Philothea wanted to be taken in the Romanian Country, to Curtea de Argeş Monastery, the archbishop wrote to Voivode Radu Negru to receive this holy and priceless jewelry for the protection and for the comforting of the rightly-believer Romanian people. Thus, the clergy from Trnovo accompanied the holy relics in procession, to the River Danube's bank, and from there her holy relics were taken by the clergy, by the monks, and by the Romanian believers, led by the metropolitan and by the ruler of the Romanian Country, and they took her holy relics and placed them to the Curtea de Argeş Monastery, in the church.

Thus, the holy relics of Holy Martyr Philothea reached our country. They enjoy a great honor in the Romanian Orthodox Church, together with the holy relics of other saints who have holy relics on Romanian land. But especially in the countries of Argeş, Dîmboviţa, and Prahova, Saint Philothea is honored in a special manner, by local pilgrimages visiting her holy relics, and with prayers

for the ill ones, among which many receive health and help. The greatest pilgrimage to the holy relics of Saint Philothea takes place on 7th of December, when her annual celebration is held. On that day, many believers from several areas of the country come and participate to the procession done in the monastery's courtyard.

Yore, on time of drought, there were organized processions for rain through the villages of Muntenia, and God, for her prayers blessed the land with rain and with comforting. The processions were organized in this manner: the priests and the believers form the villages sent a delegation of peasants to Curtea de Argeş Monastery, in order to ask for the holy relics of Saint Martyr Philothea, to be brought to their villages. After obtaining from the bishop and from the abbot the due blessing, it was established the day of the procession and the itinerary to be followed. Then was prepared a special car to transport the holy tabernacle and the delegated hieromonks. Until recently, her holy relics were transported in a chariot pulled by white horses.

The believers, in traditional national vestments, together with the priest, dressed up in priestly vestments, with the Holy Gospel in his hand, they were waiting for the holy relics at the border of their village, carrying flowers in their hands, basil, and lit up candles. In the sound of the bells, the procession was going to the church from the center of that village. In the front of the procession were walking the old men carrying crosses, religious flags, lamps, and the national flag. After officiating a religious service in the church and singing the akathists of Holy Martyr Philothea, all the villagers, the old people, the widows, the ill people, the mothers and the children, they were bowing down and worshipping her holy relics. Then the procession continued in the fields, in the village's hearth, where there were made persevering prayers for rain, with all the believers kneeled down. After the religious service, the holy relics were transported ahead to the neighboring villages. By the prayer of Saint Philothea, God sent rain over the thirsty fields and that strengthened the faith and the hope in the believers' hearts.

Holy Martyr Philothea, pray to God for us!

METROPOLITAN THEODOR OF VICINA
(The second half of Century XIII)[96]

This metropolitan is the first hierarch documentary attested as shepherd and as spiritual father of the Metropolitanate of Vivina, and he occupied the throne of this eparchy in the year 1283, under Emperor Andronicus II Paleologos (1282-1328). Vicina was a citadel-city, dating from around Century IX, situate in North of Dobrogea, at the River Danube's Mouths, and identified by several historians as Noviodonum (today's Isaccea), but documentary

[96] Fr. Prof. I. Rmureanu, "The Metropolitan of Vicina and Its Role in Preserving the Orthodoxy in the Romanian Countries", in *From River Danube to the Black Sea*, Bucharest, 1979, pp. 146-169.

attested only since the beginning of the Century XII, in the writing called "Alexiada" written by Anna Comnena, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I the Comnen (1081-1118).

Metropolitan Theodor of Vicina was probably Greek, born either in Byzantium or in Pontic Dacia which, after the year 971 it was called Paristxion or Paradunavon, and it had its capital as Dorostolon, the former Durostorum of today's Silistra. The north of Dobrogea (the River Danube's Mouths) wasn't never occupied by migrator populations, and it formed, until the falling of Constantinople "a small provincial Byzantium", having an episcopal throne, with Greek and Romanian settlements, with a few renowned monasteries and hermitages, and having a strong religious and cultural influence upon the provinces from South of Moldavia and the East of the Romanian Country.

Blessed Metropolitan Theodor participated in the year 1285 to the Synod of the Patriarchy of Constantinople, held in Blachernae Church (namely of the Vlachs), signing the proclamations as "*The Humble and All-Honored Metropolitan of by God Defended City of Vicina*". In the year 1292 Metropolitan Theodor came against to Constantinople, where he signed "*The Synodic Tome Against Latins*". He shepherded the flock of Christ from the River Danube's Mouths until the end of the century XIII, having good relationships with the metropolitans from around the neighboring eparchies. He took care of the believers from North of River Danube, by sending them missionary priests and monks ordained at Vicina. He much supported the monastic settlements form his eparchy, as also the Saint Anastasius the Great Monastery from Niculițel, and the hermitages from Chilia and Saint George from River Danube's Delta, which were at that time quite famous.

Reaching an old age, he moved to the eternal life somewhen around the end of the century XIII.

SAINTS AND PIOUS
From Centuries XIII-XV

SAINT MARTYR JOHN THE NEW FROM SUCEAVA
(2nd/24th of June) († 1330)[97]

a. His Life

Saint Martyr John the New from Suceava, whose holy relics have been in our country for six hundred years, he was born in Trapezund, around the year 1300, to rightly-believer and much-loving-of Christ parents. Being him a merchant as his father was too, the pious John left his natal city, by ship, for Cetatea Albă, a city situated at the River Nistru Mouths, then under the rule of the Tatars who were idols worshippers. While sailing on the Black Sea, he had dialogues on faith with a Venetian merchant called Reiz. But, by seeing himself overwhelmed in words, by Saint John, who was zealously confessing and defending the right Orthodox faith, the Venetian decided to avenge himself on John.

Arriving to Cetatea Albă, Reiz accused John before the ruler of the city, as John would want to reject his faith and to worship the sun and the pagan idols. But John, confessing Christ with a great strength and courage, he was submitted to cruel torments and beatings in order to reject the true God. Then, because they saw him steadfast in hir right faith and ready to sacrifice his life for the Holy Gospel, they beat him even more cruelly and they dragged him on the streets of Cetatea Albă, tied to the tail of a horse, until a fanatic Jew beheaded him with the sword. John was only thirteen. At night, being seen a choir of angels and torches lit around his body, his holy relics were taken and placed with honor in the Orthodox Church from Cetatea Albă. There they were kept for 70 years, and they worked many miracles and healings of illnesses.

In the year 1402, on 2nd of June, the holy relics of Saint Martyr John "the New" were brought, with great honor, from Cetatea Albă and placed in the Mirăuţi Church from City of Suceava that was, at that time, the former capital of Moldova. Thus, Saint Martyr John the New became the first saint defender and quickly-helper of the Moldavians. In the year 1589 the holy relics of Saint Martyr John the New were moved from the old cathedral to the new cathedral built by Voivode Bogdan III, where they are today.

After staying for a while in the old Metropolitanate from Iasi, in the year 1686 the holy relics of Saint Martyr John the New were taken away by the Polish army led by John Sobietsky, and, together with Metropolitan Dositheos and with a big part of the country's thesaurus, they were brought to Lvov. After 97 years of estrangement, on 13th of September 1783, his holy relics were brought back, with great honor, to Suceava, and they were placed in the old cathedral, where they are today. His remembrance in the Romanian Orthodox Church is done on 2nd and on 24th of June.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

[97] *Menaion* in 2nd of June; *The Hagiographical Dictionary*, p. 435; Bishop Pime of Suceava, *Romanian Saints*, p. 291.

1. When the Blessed John was brought in front of the pagan ruler of the Cetatea Albă, that ruler, urged by the devil and by the devil's servants, told to John:

- I have found out about you that you are a wise man, and that you have been loving the Mohammedan faith and that you want to come close to it. For that, of, my friend, do not tarry anymore; but reject your Christian faith defamed by everybody, curse your law and your church in front of the people gathered here, and stay together with us to extoll the sun, the moon, and the stars.

And the valiant soldier of Christ answered him:

- I won't ever reject the true God in order to worship the ungodly people, the sun, and the created things. Don't allow me to reject You, my Savior Christ Who are God extolled together with the Father and with the Holy Ghost!

Then the ruler of the city, hearing what Saint Martyr John the New said, he punished him to be cruelly beaten and, tying him to the tail of a horse the soldiers dragged him on the paved in stones roads of the Cetatea Albă, until somebody beheaded him with a sword.

2. Hearing the Venetian merchant about the martyrdom of Saint John, he thought to steal John's body from his grave, at night. But while the Venetian merchant was digging his tomb, the martyr of Christ appeared in a dream to the Orthodox priest and told him:

- Wake up and run immediately to the church, because my traitor wants to steal my body form the tomb!

The priest went and saved John's holy relics and be buried them in the alter, near to the Holy Table.

3. The Metropolitan of Moldavia, Josheph I Muşat, heard about the holy relics of the Martyr John the New from Cetatea Albă, and about the miracles worked by them, and he urged the pious Voivode Alexandru the Kind, to bring that priceless jewelry in the capital city of Moldavia, in order to be a guide, comforting, and help to the people of Moldavia who was so loving of God and of saints. Thus, the kind voivode sent a delegation of clerks, clerics, and soldiers, with an official mission, and they bought the holy relics and brought them to Suceava. When the turning back delegation had been closing to the capital city of Moldavia, the metropolitan and the voivode came to welcome them, together with the whole clergy, with the people, and with the boyars, carrying lit torches in their hands.

So, kneeling, they worshipped and kissed with hot tears the holy relics of Martyr of Christ, John the New. Then they brought with great honor in the Mirăuţi Church, where they were being kissed for three days by all the believers coming from villages. Even some ill people who were present there, by touching with faith the holy relics of Saint John the New, they were healed of their sufferings, among whom there was also Ana, the wife of the voivode, who had been suffering, for a long time, of a grave illness; after her healing she live for other seventeen years. And his holy relics were placed in the Suceava City at 2nd of June, the salvation year 1402.

4. Among the many miracles worked by the holy relics of Saint John the New from Suceava, we owe to mention, in the first place, how the great martyr saved the people and the capital city of Moldavia from the invasion of the pillagers and killers of people Tatars.

In May 1622, thousands of Tatar solders invade Moldavia, pillaging and setting in fire the villages they came across to. Because of fear, the inhabitants were, a part of them, hiding in the forests, while others sook for refuge in the Suceava City. But they saw, in dread, how the Tatars were closing to pillage the city, so that the people ran to metropolitanate to ask for the help of Saing John. During the night between 1st and 2nd of June, Metropolitan Athanasius Crimca took vigil for the whole night, together with the people, and he imparted the crowd with the Holy Mysteries, and he urged the people to pray to God with faith. Then they circled the cathedral, for three times, with the Gospel and with the holy relics of Saint John which were placed in a cart pulled by oxen, and then they started going to hide themselves in the Suceava Stronghold.

When they tried to get out, the holy relics seemed to be so heavy that the cart didn't move. Then everybody understood that the Saint Martyr doesn't want to let the city prey in the hands of the pagans, so that they circled the stronghold's walls with his holy relics and they waited for the morning to come. In the morning, the people made again prayers with tears, so that God sent, through the mediation of his martyr, a big storm with strong winds and with thunders, so that the Tatars couldn't cross River Suceava and enter the city. Then the pagans got scared and crossed River Nistru in a hurry, ashamed.

Saint John saved so the City of Suceava from pillage and killings, towards the praise of God and towards the joy of the Christians.

5. Since the year 1686 the holy relics of Saint John were taken from Suceava and brought in Poland, to Zolkiev, together with the Metropolitan Dositheos, and they worked countless miracles and healings of illnesses there, for 97 years, so that there were running to the holy relics of the great martyr all kinds of Orthodox and catholic believers, and they received help according to each ones' faith and piousness. Thus, through his holy relics was done a real Christian ecumenism for almost a century, between Orthodox and Catholics.

6. But the bringing back of the holy relics of Saint John the New, that took place on 13th of September 1783, it is reckoned as a miracle too, because nobody hopes, after almost a century, to be again brought in the land of Moldavia the most beloved defender and praying for the country and for the Romanian people, who were so cruelly tried along centuries, but who were so faithful and loving of saints. That was proven, in the first place, by the faith and by the zeal of Bishop Dositheos of Rădăuți, whom we owe the bringing back to Suceava of the holy relics of Saint John the New. Then the big number of Orthodox clergy and believers who welcomed with flowers and with lit candles the tabernacle with the holy relics as they were transported from Poland to Moldova. Who could describe the general joy of the Moldavians as the holy relics were crossing through their villages? For everywhere sounded the bells of the churches, and the people were playing the alpenhorns, and

resounded cannon salvoes, and the villagers welcomed the procession with their priests dressed up in their vestments, accompanied by children and by the ill people from that villages, carrying torches and flowers.

In this atmosphere of joy into Christ and of spiritual brotherhood, the holy relics of Saint John crossed through North Moldavia, for almost three months, until they were placed again in the Cathedral of the former metropolitanate of Suceava.

7. To the celebration of Saint John, on 24th of June 1989, participated some of the pilgrims coming form Moldavia and form the neighboring provinces. The whole Suceava City was full of believers. On that occasion there came also the wife of a Moldavian boyar. That woman, after bowing down in worshipping in front of the holy relics, she got into the carriage pulled by four horse and ordered to the coachman to go home. But no matter how much he was whipping the horses, the couch didn't move, so that that woman was engulfed by fear. Then she got out of the coach and went to tell the bishop and the priests about what was going on and she asked for their help. The bishop told her:

- Lady, you might have committed some sin today and that's why you cannot go home! Go and bow down in worshipping in the church, confess your sins to a priest, and I think you will be able to go home without any other problems.

That lady confessed with tears in her eyes that she broke a piece of Saint John's finger, to take it away with her for blessing and for help. Then the priest gave her as canon to put back the taken piece and to ask Saint Martyr John for forgiveness and to make prayers and to do prostrations, for that was the only way she could leave from there. After she did what the priest asked her to do, the woman left in peace and joy for her home.

8. In the year 1964 there was brought to Saint John a mentally ill man, for prayer. After that man was administrated the Holy Unction for three times, he was healed. On the third day he turned back to monastery, healed, and he gave thanks to God.

9. In the autumn of the year 1969, a man from the countryside around Suceava was suddenly muted, by the work of satan. His relatives brought him to the holy relics of Saint John for prayer. the priests administrated upon that man the Holy Unction, they read to him the exorcist prayers of Saint Basil, and they asked him to read the Akathist of Saint John the New near to the holy relics. At night, the ill man slept in the monastery, and the text morning he woke up healed and he turned back home, giving praise and thanks to our Savior Jesus Christ and to Saint Martyr John the New.

10. In the year 1960, a little girl from Putna-Suceava Commune lost her sight because of some disease. A pious Christian from that commune brought that little girl to Saint John from Suceava. There, both of them prayed, and then the priests administrated the Holy Unction to the little girl, and then they anointed her to her eyes with sanctified oil. Later on, while the old woman was

leading that little girl out of the church, full of awe and with tears in her eyes, that little girl shouted out:

- Aunty, I am seeing, I don't need you to hold my hand anymore! Saint Great Martyr John, heal my eyes and the pain of my heart!

Giving praise to God for that miracle, both of them turned back home healthy and with great joy.

11. In the year 1969, a Christian woman called Mary, form the Village Ciumulești-Suceava, was sick in her eyes and she was seeing almost nothing. But, as she heard about the holy relics of Saint John, she was brough to Suceava. There, she bowed down in worshipping to the holy relics, she confessed her sins, and she was imparted with the Body and with the Blood of Christ, and they performed upon her the Holy Unction, for three times. For her much faith, that woman got completely healed and, thanking to the great martyr, she turned back to her home, healed.

12. In the same year, a girl who was nine years old, called Ana, from the Village Corni – Botoșani, because of being frightened, she lost her voice. Being her brought to the Monastery to Saint John of Suceava, they performed upon her the Holy Unction, for three times, and she got healed on the spot, so that everybody wondered about the gift of the healing springing out from those holy relics.

13. A technician who was working in a university laboratory, he got irradiated and paralyzed, so that he was unbale even to feed himself. Hearing about Saint John, he went to where the relics were kept, with great faith and hope into the help form God. Falling on his knees, he prayed much, with tears, saying:

- Saint Great Martyr John, I know that for my sins God punished me with this illness. But I know that the Lord is merciful with us, the sinners, and you heal the ill people which come to see you with faith. I pray you, heal also my ill hands, so that I will be able to worship God, to feed myself, for I am sorry for my sins and I have decided to follow Christ from now on!

As he was praying with the whole his heart, and he was shedding tears, he felt a foreign warmth in his hands and a shiver of his nerves from fingers all the way to shoulders. Then he started feeling and moving his fingers, his palms, and his whole arms. Conscious that, on that moment, God healed his paralyzed arms, he fell again to his knees in prayer, thanking to the Lord and to His martyr, with tears of joy.

After a while, he got up and left happily for his home, confessing to everybody how the Lord had mercy on him.

14. The celebration day of Saint Martyr John the New from Suceava – that takes place, by tradition, on 24th of June – on Midsummer –, it has special churchly dimensions and it has a profound Orthodox character. On this occasion, many believers gather together from Moldavia and Transylvania, especially from Bucovina and from Maramureș, wearing traditional vestments, and carrying traditional gifts in their hands, as: wild flowers, wheat ears,

linden and fir branches, and they bring with them their numerous children. Everybody's face is enlightened by a profound spiritual joy. Together with the gifts which they place upon the holy relics, the believers bring with them, for being blessed, clothes which they touch the saint's head with.

The pilgrimage starts in the morning of 23rd of June, when the holy relics are brought out in procession, and they are carries by the hands of the pilgrims and then placed on a small baldachin, under the linden trees form the middle of the courtyard. On the eve evening they officiate the religious service of the vigil, in plain air, until around midnight. Then, the believers, grouped on areas and on villages, they take vigil on the grass, until the morning comes. Some of them pray into the church, others circle the cathedral walling in their knees of singing, and others sing with a low voice religious songs composed by themselves, and the majority wait in line to bow down in worshipping to the holy relics of Saint John the New.

In the morning of the feast day the priests sanctify the holy water and they officiate the Holy Unction for the sick ones. Then they officiate the Holy hierarchal Liturgy on a big podium, in the courtyard, in the presence of the worshipping crowd. Everybody's eyes look at the servants in the middle of whom there is the Metropolitan of Moldavia. The songs of the choir and the sermon touch the hearts and bring out tears. At the end of the religious service, many believers try to touch the vestments of the serving priests, and especially those of the metropolitan.

The last action closing the religious service of the feast day is that of bringing the holy relics back into the church, around four o-clock in the evening. By tradition, the tabernacle is carried on the hand of believers coming only from Maramureş, who, for twenty-four hours, they stood up in vigil, eating nothing, until the holy relics are place back into the church. Then, the wave of pilgrims flows towards their villages and towards the rail station, praying in quietude, and they are waited for in their homes by their families, bringing presents like: icons, small crucifixes, holy water, sanctified oil, flowers, and blessed clothes touched by the holy relics.

The celebration day of Saint John the New from Suceava, together with that of Pious Parascheva from Iasi, they are among the most representative religious feats and they have an old national Orthodox tradition, contributing much to our unity into Christ.

Saint Martyr John, you much suffering, pray to God for us!

METROPOLITAN MAKARIOS OF VICINA
(ca. 1337-1377)[98]

After Metropolitan Theodor followed to Luke, and in the year 1337 reached to be shepherd of the Archbishopric of Vicina, from the Mouth of the

[98] *From Rive Danube to the Black Sea*, pp. 157-160; *The History of the Romanian Church*, vol. I, p. 221.

River Danube, the blessed Metropolitan Macarius, who guided the flock of Christ from Dobrogea (Paristrion) for more than ten years. Though in the year 1341 Dobrogea was occupied by Tatars, the new hierarch made strenuous efforts for maintaining the calm and the unity of his believers.

Between the year 1341-1347, Metropolitan Macarius of Vicina took part to several local synods which took place at the Patriarchy of Constantinople. In the two synods from the years 1341 and 1343 which discussed and defended Saint Gregory Palamas, regarding the hesychastic teaching from Mount Athos about the spiritual enlightenment, by practicing the Prayer to Jesus and the teaching about the divine uncreated energies of the Holy Ghost, Metropolitan Macarius of Vicina, together with the Ecumenical Patriarch John XIV Caleca, they approved these Palamite teachings of spiritual enlightenment and increase, as being totally true and Orthodox. At the first synod Archbishop Macarius, himself a former monk from Mount Athos and practicing the hesychastic prayer, he signed on the eight position and at the next synod he signed at the thirteenth position.

Metropolitan Macarius, a theologian formed at Mount Athos, he was good friends with Saint Gregory Palamas, who was the Archbishop of Thessaloniki, and with Saint Gregory of Sinai, the founded of the Paroria Monastery, a renowned hesychastic center, where lived in ascesis numerous "Vlach" monks from The Romanian Country and from Dobrogea. The Metropolitan of Vicina defended steadfastly the Orthodoxy at the Mouths of River Danube, he supported the Monastery funded by Saint Athanasius the Great at Niculiţel and the small hermitages existing in that area, he established connections with Voivode Alexander Bassarab I, and he ordained priests for The Romanian Country and for the South of Moldavia. He was a souly father for the Romanians both from South and from North of River Danube.

Around the year 1347, the Blessed Hierarch Macarius moved peacefully to the heavenly dwelling places.

METROPOLITAN HYACINTH OF VICINA
The first Metropolitan of the Romanian Country
(1359-1372)[99]

The last metropolitan of Vicina and the first shepherd of the Church of Christ from Dobrogea and from The Romanian Country, reunited under the rule of a sole voivode, it was Archbishop Hyacinth. He shepherded only for a few years at Vicina, and in the year 1359 he moved his throne to Curtea de Argeş Monastery, at the request of the great Voivode Alexandru I Basarab, the founder of the Romanian Country, who wanted to have a metropolitan in his kingdom. Thus, Metropolitan Hyacinth became spiritual shepherd to all the

[99] *From River Danube to The Black Sea*, pp. 160-164; *The History of the Romanian Church*, vol. I, pp. 247-248.

Romanians from Dobrogea and from The Romanian Country. He was consecrating churches, he was ordaining priests, he was sharing blessing to the so rightly-believer people of the "Vlachs", and he was a close adviser to the great voivode.

Thus, the Vicina Eparchy disappeared and it came to existence a new Romanian Metropolitanate, known under the name of "The Hungarian-Vlach Metropolitanate", subordinated to the Ecumenical Patriarchy from Constantinople, then led by Patriarch Kallistos I.

As shepherd and spiritual father of all Romanians living between River Danube and Carpathian Mountains, Metropolitan Hyacinth took care of ordaining priests for all villages, to built up churches in cities and in villages, to found new monastic settlements, and to keep the Romanian Church in tight spiritual connection with the Patriarchy of Constantinople. And as "Exarch of the plains" the metropolitan took care of the Orthodox believers form the neighboring counties, especially from Transylvania, whom he was sending missionary priests and monks to. This hierarch, together with the voivode of The Romanian Country, Vladislav I (1364-1377), they encouraged and supported the Romanian monasticism, whose beginning dated all the way back to the Century IV, through the monastic and hermits center from Buzău Mountains. He brought in the country Saint Nicodemus from Tismana, who was coming from Mount Athos, with the task of organizing a few center-monasteries, according to the monasteries form Mount Athos. He sent numerous "Vlachs" monks to Cutlumuş-Monastery from Mount Athos, where they reached to be renowned monks. And he organized several monasteries in the country, at: Tismana, Curtea de Argeş, Cîmpulung-Muscel, Cozia, Snagov, Bolintin Deal, Bolintin Vale, Tînganu, Cotmeana, and others. After such a fruitful shepherding, he passed away, peacefully, in the year 1372.

PIOUS GHERMAN THE HIEROMONK
The First Abbot of Neamț Monastery
(1320-1362)[100]

Before the Romanian Countries were founded, the monks were spiritually educated in the small hermitages existing along Carpathian Mountains, as also at Mount Athos. Some of them passed away there, in complete sacrifice and pleasing to God. Other turned back and founded new hermitages in quiet places or even in the neighborhood of some villages.

One of these autochthonous hermits was Pious Gherman from Neamţ, who lived in ascesis, in his youth, at Mont Athos. Then, he came back to the land of his parents, with a few disciples, and they found a reclusive place in Neamţ Mountains, and he was guided by the Holy Ghost to found a hermitage

[100] Deacon Ioan Ivan and Fr. Scarlat Porcescu, *Neamț Monastery*, 1981, pp. 281-283; Narcis Crețulescu, *The Inscriptions of Neamț Monastery*, 1905, p. 171.

there. He founded at the beginning of the Century XIV a renowned hermitage on the place of the today's Neamţ Monastery.

Gherman, as spiritual adviser, he gathered around him several disciples, and they erected in the glade a small wooden church under having Saint John the Theologian as its patron. In the year 1320, the disciples elected Gherman as their abbot and spiritual father, and all of them lived together in ascesis and in consummate love for Christ, and in prayer and in hope, all of them one thought and one will. So, the people from the neighboring villages heard about the hermits from Neamţ, and, in time, other lovers of quietude come and lived together with them in that community, so that, around the half of the century XIV there live 40 monks.

The *Hermitage of Gherman*, also called as *The Hermitage of John the Theologian*, was renewed latter on by Bogdan I, the foudxner of Modlavia (1359-1365) and by his descendants, so that it became the first voivodal monastery of the Muşat Dynasty.

Pious Gherman the Hieromonk, he guided the community until the year 1362. He became a renowned spiritual adviser of the monks, a teacher, and a worker of the Prayer to Jesus, teaching the hermits that godlike work. He founded in Neamţ the first hesychastic monastery and the first hesychastic hearth, whose disciples spread themselves later on along the Eastern Carpathians.

Reaching an old age, and being pleasant to God, Pios Gherman, the first Abbot of Neamţ Monastery, passed away in peace and he was counted among the group of the pious fathers.

PIOUS CYPRIAN THE HIEROSCHEMAMONK
The Second Abbot of Neamţ Monastery
(1362-1373)[101]

This hieroschemamonk was the first disciple of Abbot Gherman and he lived together with Abbot Gherman, in ascesis, at Mount Athos. After his spiritual father died, Pious Ciprian reached to be the chief of Neamţ Monastery, and he ruled this monastery for more than ten years, as abbot. Pious Ciprian raised numerous spiritual sons, accustoming them to humbleness, to prayer, and to the consummate love for Jesus Christ. Under his leadership, the number of the monks from Neamţ Monastery reached over 80. One of them was also the renown Joseph Muşat, a relative of the Muşat Dynasty, tonsured in monasticism by Abbot Ciprian and replacing Abbo Ciprian after his death.

Abbot Ciprian was also a skilled teacher of the heart's prayer. During his rule the hesychastic life around the monastery had developed. The hesychasts from Neamţ Monastery lived alone or in groups formed by two of three individuals, dwelling in small chambers dug in the soil or in wooden shacks.

[101] Deacon Ioan Ivan and Fr. Scarlat Porcescu, *cited work*, pp. 281-283.

Their food was the forest berries and the bread received from Pious Ciprian's community. During fasting periods, the hesychasts didn't descend at all to the monastery, and in the other days they came down only on holidays and they were imparted with the Body and the Blood of the Lord. Their best adviser was the abbot himself of the Neamț Monastery.

After living thus in ascesis and being pleasant to God, Pious Ciprian passed away peacefully, in the year 1373, entrusting the community in the hands of archimandrite Joseph Mușat (1373-1386).

PIOUS AGATHON THE HERMIT
Buzău Mountains
(Century XIV)[102]

This great hermit lived in ascesis in the Buzău Mountains, in the first half of the Century XIV. In the first period he lived in ascesis in a cave under the mountain of Martirie, belonging to the Fundătura Hermitage. Then, reaching to be a skilled hermit in fighting the spiritual battle, and reaching to be a teacher of the scetic life, he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, gathering several disciples around him. The pious spiritual adviser was a guide of souls and a spiritual father to many, nourishing them with chosen words from the Holy Scripture. He also knew the works of the Holy Fathers and he was defeating, with much skillfulness, the temptations of the enemy devil.

In the second half of Century XIV, Pious Agathon settled down with a few of his disciples on the mountainous pass called as *The Cross of the Army Commander*, at a distance of about a half an hour from the Fundătura Hermitage. Here he dug in stone, with his hands, a small holy church having Saint John Chrysostom as patron, whom the pious had great awe for. Next to the church, the pious made for himself a small monastic cell, where he lived in ascesis during the day and he was fasting and praying during the night. His disciples, 12 in number according to the hesychastic tradition from those places, they also dug up, in stone, monastic cells to themselves, on the same mountain, near to Pious Agathon.

This was Agathon's hermitage, counted among the first hermitages known in Buzău Mountains, and one of the most renowned among those. Here lives in ascesis for more than three centuries over a hundred of bearer of Christ hermits, among whom many reached the measure of the holiness. Among those, though, shone Pious Agathon, as a lit-up torch on the peak of the mountain, and he became a vessel of the Holy Ghost and a father raising many spiritual sons. And his and his disciples' ascesis was thin: they gathered together at nigh in the church, and they sang the religious service of the Matins, during the day they lived in ascesis, by fasting, by doing prostrations,

[102] P. Chihaia, *From Black Voivode to Neagoe Basarab*, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 241-243; Hieromonk Ioanichie Blan, *Hearts of Romanian Hermitage*, Bucharest, 1982, pp. 187-188.

and by reading the Book of Psalms, and during evening they gathered together at refectory where they ate at the same common table made of a tree trunk having twelve seats. Their food was ascetic too. They ate dry bread and boiled vegetables, without oil. On feast days, Pious Agathon officiated the Holy Liturgy and he imparted all his disciples with the Body and with the Blood of the Lord.

At the beginning of the Century XVI, the ruler of The Romanian Country, Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521), hearing about the hermitage of Agathon, together with then the bishop of Buzău and a certain nun called Theodora, they made some donations to them so that they were able to enlarge the cave church, as it is written into the remembrance-inscription carved in the altar's wall, which has been preserved until today. Later on, to that remembrance-list were added other voivodes as well, who gave alms to the monks form the Hermitage of Agathon, as: Moses, Vlad, Vintilă and his wife Rada.

In the year 1524, the Hermitage of Agathon is mentioned by a border statement issued at Afumaţi. In the second half of the Century XVI, the number of the hesychasts surpassed the 12, so that Agathon's Hermitage became a monastery following the rules of a coenobitic community. A charter dating from the year 1587 mentioned, for the first time, the *Monastery of Agathon*. At the beginning of the Century XVII the monastery was in a derelict state. In the year 1733 was repaired by other founders, and then it lasted for a while, but then it was definitively deserted.

Today one can found there only a part of the stone-church, in which one can see the apse of the altar, the apses for proskomide and for diaconicon, the founders' remembrance-list, a window, and a few traces of the nave and of the monastic cell of the great hermit.

PIOUS DIONYSUS THE HERMIT
Buzău Mountains
(Century XIV)

Pious Dionysus the Hermit was one of the most renowned hermits from Fundătura Hermitage. He lived there in ascesis in the second half of the Century XIV. By tradition he was called as "the Spinner", for he occupied himself with the spinning of the wool, out of which he made a living for himself, an occupation that was usual to most of the hermits living on the Buzău Mountains.

By the grace of Christ, he reached the measure of the dispassion, and he dug up a cave for himself, in a difficult to access rock, situated at 4 meters above the ground. In that cave the pious made for himself a small chapel for prayer and he was ceaselessly praising God. In that small cave the Pious lived in ascesis for more than 30 years, by manly enduring the cold in winter, the humidity, the hunger, and especially the dreadful temptations form the devil. And he was so advanced among the local hermits, that he was banishing the

unclean ghosts out of people and he knew the future. That's why many honored him and asked him for words of teaching.

The ascesis of Pious Dionysus the Hermit was this for the whole week he lived alone in ascesis, living in unsleeping prayer, in fasting, in guarding his mind, and in thinking at the future things. He was earning his food by spinning wool which his disciple sold it in the neighboring villages. Once a week, on Sundays, he descended from his cave and went to the church from Fundătura Hermitage where we have imparted with the Body and with the Blood of Christ. After that he climbed back to his cave, and he pulled up the ladder, and so he continued his life in ascesis. The spots where the ladder was leaned on can be seen ever today. The great Hermit Dionysus the Spinner raised several disciples who reached to be renowned hermits at their turn, and who followed thoroughly his way of life in ascesis. Thus, his monastic cell can be reckoned as a small hermitage that contributed much to the development of the hesychastic life in Buzău Mountains.

PIOUS JOSEPH THE HERMIT
Buzău Mountains
(Century XIV)[103]

Another small stone-church having a special role in developing the hesychastic life in Buzău Mountains, it was the Cave of Joseph, situated on the Bordei Valley, near Nucu Village, in the Bozioru Commune. The windows of the church seem to be dating back to Century XIII, but the presence of the fish as paleo-Christian symbol, above the entrance door, makes us think that the cave could date back to the Centuries IV or V, being used by Christians, as other caves from Buzău Mountains, during the persecutions.

Pious Joseph is counted among the most renowned hermits living in ascesis in those places. The first place where he lived in ascesis was Fundătura Hermitage, and at the beginning of the Century XV he settled down in the cave that bears his name, near to other monastic caves, and he widened up that cave and added two windows to it. In that cave Pious Josephus lived in ascesis for decades, reaching to be a great teacher of the quietude, a priest, and an adviser of souls. His name was known to far places, and many ill people came and were healed by his prayers.

Gathering several hermits around him, Pious Joseph made of his cave a real hermitage on the Bordei Valley and on the Martirie Mountains, Cecilia and the Army Chief Cross from nearby. Many of his disciples lived in small monastic cells dug up in the ground, covered with woods, and scattered all over the nearby valley. Form those hermits the whole that valley is called today as "Bordei Valley" and "Bordei Creek". Then, by moving into the group of the pious

[103] P. Chihaia, *From Black Voivode to Neagoe Basarab*, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 241-243; Hieromonk Ioanichie Blan, *Hearts of Romanian Hermitage*, Bucharest, 1982, pp. 191-192.

fathers, the cave of Joseph was inhabited by other hermits living a chosen life and who continued the string of the hermit-like life, in the same humbleness and zeal for the love for Christ. Their names and deeds though forgotten by people, but they are written in the book of life.

AN ANONYMOUS ROMANIAN SAINT
From Neamț Monastery
(Century XIV)[104]

The first settling of organized monastic life in the hearth of the Neamț Monastery took place around the beginning of the Century XIV, due to the first abbot of the monastery, namely the Hieroschemamonk Gherman (1320-1362), who gathered the monks in a self-sustaining community. Before him, the hermits were living there an idiorhythmic life, which know very little about.

In the second half of the Century XIV, the spiritual life from Neamț Monastery took a much bigger amplitude, so that the first voivodes form the Muşat Dynasty felt urged to build up here a stone church, having as patron the Ascent of the Lord. The great number of monastic tombs, most of them dating back to the century XIV, situated around the church built by Muşat Dynasty, as also from all over the enclosure of Neamț Monastery, they undeniable prove what intense was like the monastic life on that ancient hearth. Some of these tombs are even under the foundation of the voivodal church built by Stephen the Great in the year 1497. Other tombs are under the monastic cells from the enclosure, and others, obviously, are under the pavement leading to the door of the voivodal church. This proves that those tombs are earlier than the church.

For many of the remnants of the monks buried inside the enclosure do not have in the tombs the traditional bricks having inscribed on them their names and the date of their death, it is difficult to be established precisely the identity and the frequency of the monastic life here, on époques. Only God knows how many holy relics of pious monks from Neamț Monastery are in this monastic cemetery, one unique in our country.

The holiness of the life of the monks from Neamț Monastery from the Century XIV is abundantly proven by the recent discovery, by godlike miracle, the holy relics of a holy hermit from that epoque, just under the central pavement leading to the church. This happened on the 24th and 25th of May, the year 1986, when it was noticed that at the half of the distance between the bell tower and the church the thick pavement of stoned and cement raised about 30 centimeters, on the dimension of a tomb, miraculously. The news of

[104] The first miraculous signs of pavement raising had bene noticed on Saturday, 24th of May, the year 1986. Those signs repeated until Monday, 26th of May, when the abbot of the Neamț Monastery, Archimandrite Ephrem Chițcariu decided to order some excavations to be done under the pavement. Under placing the holy relics into the Church was written an official act describing that miracle, and that act is preserved in the archive of the monastery. After two days, the local authorities forbad the pilgrimage to Neamț Monastery and poured concrete over the saint's tomb.

these holy relics spread immediately all over the country. Since Monday evening on 26th of May, at night, and especially during the next days hundreds of pilgrims, peasants, city-dwellers, and intellectuals, came to bow in worshipping before the holy relics. In the first place, the lit-up candles and placed them around the tomb and they did prostrations with tears of joy, for God unveiled us a holy praying saint of our nation. Then they entered the church and they prayed there with great faith and emotion, at the holy relics and at the miracle-working icon of the Mother of the Lord, asking them for heavenly help and extolling God for everything, for they had such a great miracle in Romania.

Digging attentively, at about 1,5 meters deep there has been found the extolled body of a monk with holy life, who lived in the Century XIV, buried here before the building of the voivodal church and of the pavement. His bones were still connected and they present all the conditions required for being declared holy relics, by the canons of the Orthodox Church.

After exhumation, the found bones were placed in a small coffin and they were placed into the Church, by the community of the monks from Neamţ Monastery, accompanied by the sound of the ringed bells, with the whole due piousness and rituals. Until now, the name of the pious from Neamţ Monastery has remained unknown.

Lo how many unknown saints are still hidden in the holy land of our country!

PIOUS SOPHRONY, PIMEN, AND SILOUAN
Neamţ Monastery
(Centuries XIV-XV)

These three pious originated from Moldavia Country, and they were accepted in monasticism at Mount Athos. For, being they called by Christ, they became monks in their youth and they reached to be renown hermits in one of the monastery form Mount Athos. Then, after they had heard about Pious Nicodemus the Sanctified, they became his disciples, living in ascesis for a few years, together with him, at Hilandar Monastery.

Around the year 1365, Pious Nicodemus came to The Romanian Country, so that Pious Sophrony, Pimen, and Silouan accompanied him to Moldavia and they entered the community of Neamţ Monastery, under the rule of Abbot Ciprian. And all of them were consummate monks and spiritual guides loving Christ, living as hermits in the ancient forests from around the big monastery, and forming numerous disciples.

For their holiness, these pious fathers were worthy of being also abbots of Neamţ Monastery, somewhere to the end of the Century XIV. Thus, Pious Sophrony shepherded the community of Neamţ Monastery between the year 1392-1393, under the reigning of Roman I Muşat, reckoned by some

remembrance-lists mentioning the founders, as "the first abbot of Neamț Monastery". Hieroschemamonk Pimen led this monastery between the years 1393-1400, contributing much to the renewal of the monastery. And Pious Silouan was abbot of the Neamț Monastery between the years 1400-1402, continuing the spiritual activity of his forerunners.

Pious Sophrony, Pimen, and Silouan[105], after completing their well their journey in this life and by letting behind over a hundred of disciples, they moved to the eternal life, by yielding their souls in the hand of the Lord.

SAINT NICODEMUS FROM TISMANA MONASTERY
(† 26th of December 1406)[106]

a. His Life

Pious Nicodemus the Sanctified was a Macedonian-Romanian, born at Prilep – Serbia, around the year 1320, being kindred with the family of Dictator Lazarus and of the voivode of The Romanian Country, Nicolas-Alexander Basarab. After he finished his education, we went in his youth to Mount Athos and became a monk there in the Hilandar Monastery, where later on he reached to be abbot and even in the ruling council of the Holy Mountain.

After the year 1365 he came to The Romanian Country and he founded here, with the help of Voivodes Vlaicu (1364-1377) and Radu I (1377-1383), the Vodița (1369) and Tismana (before the year 1377) Monasteries. He also founded at South of Rive Danube two little monastic settlements called Vratna and Mînăstirița; in Oltenia he founded the monastic settlements form Gura Motrului and from Vișina; and in Haeg Country he founded Prislop Monastery (at the end of the Century XIV), where he wrote the Four Gospels in Slavonic (1404-1405).

At the end of the year 1406, Pious Nicodemus moved peacefully from this life, letting behind numerous disciples.

b. Deeds, and Teaching Words

1. Reaching at Athos, the Garden of Lord's Mother, Pious Nicodemus firstly lived in ascesis in the monastic community, and later on he lived alone in a cave near to Hilandar Monastery. Enduring heavy temptations form the devil. But by being him overshadowed by the gift from Christ, in a short time he cleansed himself of passions, he learnt the godlike work of the holy prayer, and he was found worthy of the gifts of knowing the future and of working of miracles, so that he reached famous all over Mount Athos.

2. As abbot of the big Hilandar Monastery, Pious Nicodemus gathered in his community up to a hundred monks from Athos: Greeks, Serbians,

[105] Dacon Ioan Ivan and Fr. Scarlat Porcescu, *cited work*, p. 281; *The Founders Remembrance List of Neamț Monastery*; prof. C. Tomescu, *Short Historical Story about Neamț Monastery*, 1942, pp. 9-10.

[106] Stephen the Hieromonk, *The Life of Saint Nicodemus*, Craiova, 1935; *The Lives of the Saints*, on December, pp. 200-2007; *The Menaion* on December the 26th.

Macedonians, Romanians, and Bulgarians, teaching all of them to fear God and nourishing them with the teachings of the Holy Scripture. This was because he was a skillful teacher of the Prayer to Jesus, as also a theologian and a spiritual father to many. That's why not few hermits, monks from the coenobitic communities, and abbots came to ask his for advice and for useful words.

3. For the honor which he enjoyed everywhere, at the ask of Prince Lazarus of Serbia, Pious Nicodemus intermediated in Constantinople, together with his disciples Isaiah and Partenius, the reconcilement between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchy. So, by seeing the patriarch and the emperor the humbleness and the wisdom of the Pious Nicodemus, and being they charmed by the holiness of his life, they immediately removed the anathema placed upon the Serbian Church, towards the praise of Christ and towards the joy of the Christians. This was the way he understood to fulfill the Gospel and to help to the salvation of his fellow humans.

4. Being him at South of River Danube, consequently to a godlike unveiling, he came to The Romanian Country where he settled down on the River Vodiţa Valley, where there was a small hermitage founded by Vlach monks. There, Pious Nicodemus, with the help from Voivode Vladislav-Vlaicu and of the hermits living there, he erected monastic cells and a church made of stone, placed under the patronage of Saint Anthony the Great, and he consecrated that church in the year 1369. The Vodiţa Monastery was later on endowed with donations and certified by voivodal chart, that "after the death of mister Nicodemus, neither the voivode nor the hierarch will appoint an abbot there, but successor of Nicodemus will be the monk chosen by himself, and further on the monk elected by the monks themselves".

5. On the Valley of Tismana River, where there were living in ascesis since the beginning of the century XIV, several hermits gathered around a small wooden church that was under the patronage of the Dormition of the Mother of the Lord, Pious Nicodemus erected, as well, at the place called "Cascades", a voivodal monastery with the help of the Voivode of The Romanian Country and of the prince Lazarus. The great abbot formed there a renowned community of monks, and he helped to maintaining the continuity of the hermit-like life on Tismana River's Valley, and he set there a coenobitic monastic rule, according to the tradition from Mount Athos. Then, by gathering around his a few enlightened monks, he founded at Tismana Monastery a famous school of calligraphers and copyists of churchly books, renowned in the whole Balkan Peninsula. From there, Pious Nicodemus led all the monasteries founded by him and he sent and received letters to and from the abbots and the disciples from Mount Athos, from Serbia, and form The Romanian Country, among whom there was Patriarch Euthimios of Trnovo; Pious \Nicodemus proved himself to be a great theologian and spiritual father.

6. At his old age, Pious Nicodemus entrusted the care for the two monasteries from Vodiţa and from Tismana to his disciple, hieromonk Agathon,

and he withdrew himself in a cave situated higher in the mountain, a cave that can be found even today. There Pious Nicodemus was spending the whole week in fasting, in vigil, and in ceaseless prayer, and on Sundays he descended to monastery, the was officiating the Holy Liturgy, and he was healing the ill ones. Then, he ate at refectory together with the monks, he comforted all of them by telling to them useful words, and then he climbed back to his cave.

7. For the holiness of his life, Pious Nicodemus was found worthy of the gifts of banishing away the unclean ghosts and of healing the human sufferings. That's why his name was known beyond the borders of The Romanian Country, and many people ran to receive help from him. It is said by the monastery's tradition that some ill people got healed immediately after they reached at Tismana Monastery. Others were healed by the prayer and by the blessing of Pious Nicodemus, or even only by touching his coat. Among the people healed by Saint Nicodemus was also the daughter of King Sigismund; she was suffering of epilepsy.

8. Reaching his old age, Pious Nicodemus the Sanctified, from Tismana, he blessed his disciples and he yielded his soul in the hand of Christ, on 26th of December 1406, and his holy relics were placed in the tomb prepared for him in the church. Because of the dangers coming later on, his holy relics were placed in a secret place. A small part of his holy relics were brought to Macedonia, and the pointer finger from his right hand is preserved at Tismana Monastery.

The Orthodox Church honors Pious Nicodemus in the group of the Saints, by officiating a remembrance religious service in his honor, on the day of his passing away.

Saint All-Pious Father Nicodemus, pray to God for us!

PIOUS PACHOMIUS THE HIEROMONK
Patriarchal Exarch and Abbot of the Peri Monastery from Maramureş (Centuries XIV-XV)[107]

This venerable abbot of Peri Monastery from Northern Maramureş, originated from Oaş Country, and he was a relative of Dragoş Vodă, the first settler of Moldavia. He entered the monastic ascesis at a young age at one of the hermitages existing in that area, and he was soon found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, and he was full of zeal for confessing Christ and for defending the Orthodox faith.

Reaching to be known in all the villages from Maramureş, Pious Pachomius became adviser and spiritual father of the Romanians from Maramureş, whom he examined and advised on the way of the salvation.

During the second half of the Century XIV, when the sons of Voivode Sas, Baliţ and Drag founded the Peri Monastery under the patronage of Saint

[107] *The History of the Romanian Church*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1957, pp. 190-199.

Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Pious Pachomius is appointed abbot of this monastery. In the year 1931, when Peri Monastery became dependent on the Patriarchy from Constantinople, Abbot Pachomius was appointed by Patriarch Anthony of Constantinople as patriarchal exarch, so that in this quality he had the right to supervise the Orthodox priests and believers from Maramureş, Ugocea, Bacău, Arva, Sălaj, Almaş, Ciceu, Unguraş, and Bistra Valley. So, Pious Pachomius went form village to village, he consecrated new churches, he appointed priests, he judges the churchly conflicts, he encouraged the peasants, the taught and he defended the right-faith. Also, he spiritually led the monasteries from Ieud, Bîrsana, and Peri from Maramureş, where tens of monks lived in ascesis, being they good servants of the Church of Christ, confessors to the believers, and defenders of the Orthodox faith. Thus, Pious Pachomius made apologists of our ancestral Orthodoxy of monks, and he made of the monastery from Maramureş true Orthodox strongholds resisting the Catholic proselytism in Northern Transylvania.

METROPOLITAN IOSIF MUŞAT
The first Hierarch of Moldavia
(1402-1415?)[108]

The first known metropolitan of Moldavia was, of course, Metropolitan Muşat. He belonged to the family founder of the Muşat Dynasty, and he was a close relative to Voivodes Peter Muat (1375-1391) and Alexander the Kind (1400-1432).

From a young age he consecrated his life to Christ in the community of Neamţ Monastery, where he learnt the fear of God and the good ascesis of the spiritual life (from the monks living there). Then, he was ordained priest, and so he reached to be abbot of the Neamţ Monastery. At the proposal of Voivode Peter Muşat, he was ordained Bishop of the While Stronghold, by Metropolitan Anthony of Halici. But Iosif didn't stay there for a long time for he was appointed as Metropolitan of Moldavia. But the Ecumenical Patriarchy refused to recognize him, and there was caused disturbance within Church, so that the humble Metropolitan Iosif withdrew from his throne to Neamţ Monastery and then to Bistriţa Monastery. Later on, he settled down at "a monastery, at Boiştea, near Tîrgu Neamţ, where his monastic cell was and where there are nuns". From there, the wise metropolitan was courageously advising the Church of Moldavia which was under pressure, and he was teaching and defending the right-faith against the Catholic proselytism, he was ordaining priests, he was advising the voivode, and he was spiritual father to everybody.

[108] *The History of the Romanian Church*, vol. I, 1957, p. 158ş Fr. Prof. M. Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Chruch*, Sibiu, 1972, pp. 61-65ş Fr. Scarlat Poercescu, "Iosif, the First Known Metropolitan of Moldavia" in the *MM Review*, XL (1964), no. 3-4, pp. 126-139; Archimandrite Ciprian Zaharia, *Iosif I Muşat, the First Great Romanian Hierarch*, Bishopric of Roman, 1988ş H. Costăchescu, *Moldavian Documents*, vol. I, Iasi, 1935, p. 219.

They say about him that he even took part to the anointing as voivode of Alexander the Kind, in the city of Suceava, in the year 1400.

On 26th of July 1401, by the will of God and at the insistence of the good voivode Alexandru I Muşat, Metropolitan Iosif was recognized by the patriarchy of Constantinople as father and chief priest on the throne of Metropolitan of Moldavia. For almost 15 years he peacefully shepherded the flock of Christ, organizing well the spiritual things and managing skillfully the churchly things, as a good steward of the house of God.

His first care was that of advising Voivode Alexander the Kind, who was his nephew, to bring, somehow, from the White Stronghold to Suceava, the holy relics of Saint Martyr John the New, as protector and comforter to the rightly-believing people. Then, himself went with a big procession, with priests and with believers, to welcome the holy relics before arriving to Iasi, at a place called "The Grove of the Hierarch", and they accompanied the holy relics and placed them in the Mirăuţi Church from the Capital City of Moldavia.

Also during those years, the pious Metropolitan Iosif renewed almost entirely his parents' foundation from Neamţ Monastery, who he endowed with the most precious jewelry: the miracle working icon of the Mother of the Lord, which he received it from Byzantium. Also, he advised the Voivode top build two beautiful monasteries: Bistriţa (1402) and Moldoviţa, as places for prayer and for eternal resting. On 7th of January 1407, Metropolitan Iosif united the two voivodal monasteries, Neamţ and Bistriţa, and he appointed as their abbot his disciple, Archimandrite Dometian, "for the two monasteries not to be separated from one another, for both of them belong to my throne"[109]. Also at his urge, Abbot Dometian wrote the famous remembrance list from Bistriţa Monastery, which have been preserved to these days[110]. To the other monasteries too: Probota, Bogdana, and Moldoviţa, he appointed good abbots and he took care of all monks, hermits, priests, believers, as a true father of all of them.

In the year 1415, reaching an old age, the Pious Metropolitan Iosif, the first father of Moldavia yielded his soul in the hand of the lord and he was buried at Bistriţa Monastery, on the south side of the narthex, where his tomb was discovered in the year 1975, during the restauration works done to the church.

[109] *Documents Regarding the History of Romania* – A. Moldavia, Centuries XIV-XV, vol. I, 1954, pp. 15-16.
[110] The Library of the Romanian Academia, no. 78, in original copy.

PIOUS DOMETIAN THE ARCHIMANDRITE
Great Abbot of the Monasteries Neamţ and Bistriţa
(1407 – ca. 1415)[111]

Archimandrite Dometian is counted among the most important abbots of Monasteries Neamţ and Bistriţa. This pious was a relative and a disciple of Metropolitan Iosif Muşat, and he took the yoke of Christ upon himself from his youth, while the great Metropolitan was abbot of Neamţ Monastery (1373-1386).

For many years Pious Dometian lives in ascesis in the monastic community, fulfilling with love the holy obedience and learning from the most advanced monks the knowledge of the book and the craftsmanship of the prayer and of the spiritual fight. Then, being found worthy of the honor of the priesthood, he was officiating the holy mysteries with much awe and fear of God, and so he reached a skillful confessor and a shepherd of souls. Being a taught monk and beloved by the community of the monks and also by the Voivode Alexander the Kind, Archimandrite Dometian was appointed, on 7th of January as abbot of Neamţ and Bistriţa, "for the two monasteries not to be separated from one another". Since that moment, both monasteries were united under the same leadership for more than 20 years.

In Neamţ Monastery, Pious Dometian renewed almost entirely, with the help of the voivode and of Metropolitan Iosif, both the church and the monastic cells, and also the spiritual life, increasing the number of the monastery's community to over 150 monks. From among those he then appointed skillful confessors and abbots, teachers and unsleeping prayers for the whole world. Also, at Neamţ Monastery Abbot Dometian founded a famous school of calligraphers and miniaturists from the Romanian Countries, a school that was not surpassed by any other monastic school, and that was led by his disciple, the venerable calligrapher monk Gavriil Uric. He also founded a rich library containing numerous patristic works, from among which many were being copied in the monastery.

In Bistriţa Monastery, Abbot Dometian increased, as well, the number of the monks to over 50 ascetics and he ordered a new rule of spiritual life, exactly as he did to Neamţ Monastery. Then he appointed confessors and chosen servants, towards the glory of God and towards honoring the founder, Alexander the Kind, who often tarried there. The most important among his disciples from Bistriţa were: Gregory and Euthimius; the hieromonks Josaphat, John, Cornelius, and Timothy; the confessor Daniel; the monks Paisius Uric, his son Gavriil Uric; and numerous others. Also, at Bistriţa Monastery the pious Dometian formed a school of calligraphs, where many young men were

[111] C. Tomescu, *Short Historical Story about the Holy Neam Monastery*, 1942, pp. 11-12ș Deacon Ioan Ivvan, and Fr. Scarlat Porcescu, *cited work*; Damian P. Bogdan, *The Remembrance List of Bistriţa Monastery*, Bucharest, 1940, pp. 86-87ș Fr. M. Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, Sibiu, 1972, pp. 64-65.

being educated by the most enlightened monks and from where came out priests from villages, teachers, catechizers, calligraphs, and copyists.

At the command of the great abbot, the monks from Bistriţa Monastery wrote the first Moldavian chronicle, and they copied several writings of the Holy Fathers. And in the year 1407 there was written the famous *Remembrance List of Bistriţa Monastery*, which Voivode Alexander the Kind is being called in "the true founder of this holly place", and "Archimandrite Dionysus, namely Dometian, ruler of this holy place".

In the *Preface* to the *Remembrance List*, abbot Dometian gives these beautiful advice pieces: "Anyone who wants to be delivered form the falling into the willing or unwilling sin, let him clean himself. Through repentance and true confession and giving of alms are the sins cleaned up, and let them who desire to be they found worthy of the eternal happiness and they to come with shame and with fear of God towards the holy and congregational and apostolic Church and to confess their sins…"[112].

Pious Archimandrite Dometian was, also. The confessor of the great Voivode Alexander the Kind, and his secret adviser as well, and he urged the voivode to built numerous churches and to do many good things in The Romanian Country. During his period of being abbot, Neamţ and Bistriţa Monasteries experienced a great spiritual and cultural development, never known to them before. The same great amplitude was experienced also by the Moldavian hesychasm around both mentioned monasteries, due to the support from the same abbot. During his period served as abbot, there occurred in the Neamţ Country a few new hermitages, as: Hang, Ceahlău, Topoliţa, Boiştea-Tîrgu Neamţ, Nechid, Tazlău, and others.

This abbot proved to be a good manager of the monasteries' wealth, and an unmatched steward of the house of God. For all these things, Archimandrite Dometian is counted among the most important abbots of the Century XV had by the Moldavian monasticism. Reaching an old age, and feeling himself summoned by Jesus, Pious Dometian gave the last kiss to his disciples and he moved to the heavenly dwelling places, in the salvation year 1415.

PIOUS GAVRIL THE HIEROMONK
The First Abbot of Cozia Monastery
(Centuries XIV-XV)

Hieromonk Gavril was one of the disciples of Saint Nicodemus the Sanctified. After he initially lives in ascesis as hermit on the Olt Valley, he entered the community of the Tismana Monastery where he learnt the craftsmanship of the spiritual life. And he was famous in that country for the holiness of his live.

[112] *Ibid*, p. 85. Original manuscript at the Library of the Romanian Academia of R.S.R., Slavic manuscripts, quota no. 78.

In the year 1388, when Voivode Mircea the Old finishes building Cozia Monastery, replacing an old hermitage from Nucet Glade, Pious Gavril was the first appointed abbot and spiritual father of the foundation of the great voivode. The same abbot was entrusted with the leadership of Comana Monastery comprising all the hermitages from Olt Valley.

Pious Gavril gathered in both monasteries up to 40 monks. Then he ordered and instated the rules for spiritual life of the Cozia and Cotmeana monasteries, which were observed with great holiness, as it turns out from the donation act of the founder: "And for the living of this place, let it be according to the rules of priest Gavril, wherever he will establish and found; and let nobody be free to diminish or to add anything to those, regardless hos least. Even after the death of priest Gavril no one will be allowed to appoint an abbot, but only the brothers will elect somebody, according to the rule established by priest Gavril".

This pious abbot organized a community life in both monasteries, with the Holy Liturgy officiated daily and with a weekly confession of the sins. On holidays, the hermits form the Olt Valley gathered to monasteries and they received the Body of Christ. Thus, all of them lived in obedience, in prayer, in love, and waiting for the future goods. And Abbot Gavril was a skillful spiritual father of the monks and of the merits form Olt Country, and he was also among the most important advisers of Voivode Mircea the Old, who visited him often and asked for his advice. Abbot Gavril was the spiritual father and comforter of the villagers living in the submontane villages from both side of Carpathian Mountains, and many believers visited him asking for blessing and for useful words.

Thus, by strengthening the monastic life in the two monasteries and reaching an old age, he yielded his soul peacefully, leaving behind many disciples.

SAINT LEONTIUS FROM RĂDĂUȚI
Bogdana Monastery
(Centuries XIV-XV)[113]

Saint Hierarch Leontius is counted among the first Romanian saints sprouted out by Moldavia's County, and he is reckoned as the true spiritual father of Pious Daniel the Hermit. According to tradition, he originated in Rădăuți. Then, aspiring to become like the Holy Fathers from yore, and his heart burning for Christ, towards the end of the Century XIV he became a hermit in the ancestral forests from that country.

[113] Fr. Dr. Liviu Stan, *The Romanian Saints*, Sibiu, 1945, pp. 14-20; Fr. Dr. Petru Reauț, "Saint Leontius from Rădăuți", in *Metropolitanate of Moldavia*, XL (1964), no. 5-6, pp. 282-289; Hieromonks Ioanichie Bălan, *Romanian Saints*, p. 331.

So, he became a monk under the name Laurentius, and he later on was found worthy of eth gift of the priesthood. Then, together with a few disciples, he founded a famous hermitage of monks in the forests of Rădăuţi, called according to his name as *Hermitage Laurentius* (Lavra) of *The Monastery of Saint Laurentius*[114]. In his congregation, Pious Laurentius formed disciples who lived a chosen live, among whom there was also Saint Daniel the Hermit. Pious Laurentius himself had such a highly spiritualized living that God found him worthy of the gift of working miracles. For many ill people were healed by his prayer and he was a father, an adviser, a teacher, and a defender to everybody.

After the foundation of the Rădăuţi Bishopric, the Voivode Alexander the Kind of Moldavia heard about his ascesis and he appointed him bishop on Moldavia's chair. And he shepherded with much wisdom the shepherd of Christ for a few years, teaching everyone the right-faith and being to everybody an example of holiness. Then, because he craved again to the hermit life, he retired from the episcopal throne and became a schemamonk under the name of Leontius, reaching to be the most famous hermit and spiritual father from the North of Moldavia. So, he lived a little longer, and he amazed everybody with his humbleness, with his ascesis, and with the gift of working miracles, and then he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hands of the Lord.

Later on, by being him extolled by certain miracles, and being him found in his tomb having his body whole and uncorrupted, he was placed with honors in the Episcopal Church from Rădăuţi, so that everybody could came and bow down in worshipping him, and many believers received health and comforting from his holy relics, so that he reached to be famous beyond Moldavia's borders.

In the year 1639, the church was looted, and the holy relics of Saint Leontius from Rădăuţi disappeared. Some people believe they were stolen by invaders. Others say that the holy relics were buried by monks in the church, in the year 1783, once the monastery has been disbanded. But only God knows where his holy relics are today. In the year 1621-1622, a famous Ukrainian theologian, Hieromonk Zacharia Kopystenski of Kiev, wrote about him: "In Rădăuţi, in Bishopric, Saint Leontius the Miracles Worker lies with his body whole"[115].

Saint All-Pious Father Leontius, pray to God for us!

[114] On the place where it was *The Hermitage of Leontius* today is the Laura Village – Suceava.
[115] Fr. Prof. Liviu Stan*, cited work*, p. 17.

PIOUS MAKARIUS THE HIEROMONK
The Founder of Boiştea – Neamţ Monastery
(Centuries XIV-XV)[116]

This pious father became a monk in Neamţ Monastery and he was a disciple of Metropolitan Iosif Muşat, while the last one was abbot in that monastery (1373-1386). Then, after receiving the gift of the priesthood, he reached to be a faithful servant of the Church of Christ and a skillful confessor.

Abbot Dometian (1407-1415), knowing the good ascesis of Hieromonk Makarius, he entrusted him the subordinated unit of the Neamţ Monastery, where were the stables where the monastery's cattle spent their winter time, at Graşi – Tîrgu Neamţ. He performed this task, having as subordinates around 20 monks and brothers. All of them lived in consummate love, fulfilling their task with holiness and praising God, day and night.

The news about this great confessor spread in all the neighboring villages and many believers had him as spiritual father. Seeing that his disciples multiplied, Hieromonk Makarius founded a praying -place, around the year 1449 (?), in the forests near to Tîrgu Neamţ, namely the hermitage for nuns from Boiştea[117]. The church having the patronage of the Birth of the Mother of the Lord, it was initially built on wood, and then it was replaced by a construction in stone. The first confessor was the founder of the monastery himself, Hieromonk Makarius, and the first nuns living in that monastic settlement were 30 nuns from Neamţ Country. Being founded this settlement with congregational life, in a short while Boiştea Monastery became a famous hermitage of nuns, having the same spiritual rules of ascesis like the main monastery whose subordinated unit it was.

The name and the deeds of Pious Makarius spread all over the country, reaching to Voivode Stehpen the Great who made donations. And Pious Makarius was gentle, humble, and very advanced at prayer. He had also the gift of banishing the unclean ghosts and many people were healed by his prayers, and he was a skillful adviser of souls and teacher of the prayer.

Living thus in ascesis for more than 60 years, Pious Makarius peacefully yielded his soul in Chrit's arms, leaving in his monastery over 50 nuns.

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[116] I. Grigoraș, I. Caproșu, *Churches from Moldavia*, p. 60; *Stoicescu*, *Bibliographical Repertory – Moldavia*, Bucharest, 1974, pp. 98 and 148.

[117] Boiștea Monastery functioned for almost two centuries, being for the whole time occupied by nuns. Then, because the village bearing the same name was founded near to the monastery, the church became parish and the nuns withdrew to Topolița - Neamț Monastery, taking with them the icon of the Mother of the Lord, of Byzantine provenance, which the traditions tells about that it was bestowed by Metropolitan Iosif Mușat, From Topolița, that icon reached to the Hermitage Gârcina-Neamț, and in the year 1803 was transferred, together with the community of the nuns to Agapia Monastery, where it can be seen today.

PIOUS JOB THE HERMIT
Bogdăneşti Monastery
(Centuries XIV-XV)

Hermit Job became a monk at Bogdăneşti Monastery – Suceava (1365-1512), where he lived in ascesis for a few years, towards the end of Century XIV. Then, for he wanted to ceaselessly extoll God, he withdrew himself in the ancient forests from under the Pleşu Peak, where he lived as a hermit, in harsh ascesis, enduring big temptations form the devil. The news about this great ascetic spread everywhere, for he had the gift of the Holy Ghost and he was a miracles-worker. He was banishing the evil ghosts from within people and he knew the future. After gathering around himself more than 15 monks, he founded a small hermitage, known for a long time as *The Hermitage of Job*, and later on as *Iova Glade*. This was the hermitage of the monks from Bogdăneşti-Rîşca Monastery. For centuries, up to these days, there have been hermits living in ascesis, unsleeping prayer of our nation.

The monastic cells of the disciples were near to Pious Job's monastic cell, and in the middle was erected a small wooden church. On holidays they celebrated the Holy Liturgy and they received the Holy Mysteries. The tradition tells us about Job that he was a renowned confessor and teacher of the prayer. Many monks and laymen came to him for prayer and for useful words. After such a hermit-like ascesis, Pious Job the Hermit yielded his soul in Christ's hands, and he was added to the group of the pious fathers.

Pious Job, pray to God for us!

PIOUS SYLVESTER THE HERMIT
Sylvester-Ceahlău Hermitage
(Century XV)

Hieroschemamonk Sylvester, one of the oldest known hermits living on Ceahlău Mountain, he became a monk at Neamţ Monastery, where he lived in ascesis from his youth and he reached to be a skillful confessor. Then, by hearing about the pious hermits living on Ceahlău Mountain and about the lonely placed from there, he withdrew with a few disciples on Bistriţa Valley, and, they went to the spring of a Creek called today as The Hermitage's Creek, and they lived then as hermits for many years, unknown by anybody.

Later on, for there gathered around him other hermits too, he founded in a glade a small hermitage and they built a small wooden church having the patronage of the Pentecost, during the reigning of Voivode Alexander the Kind. That holy place was called as *The Hermitage of Sylvester*, and it is first known hermitage and monastic settlement near to Ceahlău Mountain.

Pious Sylvester led the hermitage for more than 20 years, gathering around himself several hermits and establishing a highly spiritualized loving in

that community. They occupation was the ceaseless prayer, towards the glory of God and for the salvation of the people. This abbot was also a confessor to numerous hermits living in ascesis and isolation on Ceahlău Mountain. On holydays many of them descended to the hermitage where they receive the godlike Mysteries, and after that they went again to their caves or dug-in-the-ground dwelling places.

Reaching to be a famous hermit and spiritual father of the hermits from Ceahlău Mountain, around the second half of Century XV Pious Sylvester yielded his soul in Lord's hands, leaving behind numerous disciples. Later on, his former hermitage was renewed under the name of Hangu Hermitage, and in the Century XVII, there was the Pionul Monastery, according to the name of hermit Peon[118] who lived for many years in ascesis on Ceahlău Mountain.

Pious Father Sylvester, pray to God for us!

SAINT BASIL FROM MOLDOVIȚA
(Century XV)[119]

Saint Basil the Hieromonk originated from North of Moldavia; he was born to peasant parents who loved God. He heard about the highly spiritual life and the good order from Moldoviţa Monastery (Century XIV), and being him called by Christ, he became a skillful monk in that voivodal coenobitic community, surpassing many with his humbleness, prayer, and spiritual wisdom.

Metropolitan Iosif Muşat saw the ascesis and the holiness of his life, so that the metropolitan ordained him as priest and he appointed him as abbot of Moldoviţa Monastery; he guided with so much wisdom the community entrusted to him that he was honored and visited both by monks and by many believers[120]. The news about his fame reached Moldavia's Voivode, Alexander the Kind, and his advisers. This was for he received the gift of working miracles and of knowing the future, and there were no few ill people whom he healed and told them their future. He was also adviser and spiritual father to the great voivode and to many believers and hermits, and all of them benefited of his words. This holy abbot had disciples in Mount Athos and at Stoudios Monastery in Byzantium, from where he brought tens of churchly manuscripts to his monastery. He also founded at Moldoviţa a famous school of catechizer and calligrapher monks, for the needs of the churches from villages.

Thus, after traveling his trip and fulfilling the Gospel of Christ, Pious Basil passed away peacefully, leaving behind more than one hundred disciples

[118] Fr. C. Matasă, *The Guide of the Neamț Country*, Bucharest, 1929, pp. 99-104ș Idem, *The Palace of the Princes*, Bucharest, 1935, pp. 1-46; N. Stoicescu, *Bibliographical Repertory... Moldavia*, Bucharest, 1974, pp. 348, 385, 386.
[119] Deacon I. Ivan*, Pious Basil from Moldoviţa*, in *The Romanian Saints*, p. 306ș Fr. Livius Stan, *The Romanian Saints*, pp. 45-47.
[120] Pious Basil is mentioned as Abbot in the *Remembrance List of Moldovia Monastery*. His name is mentioned also in a donation chart issued by Alexander the Kind on 14th of April 1415.

and a totally special community. Proving himself, after his death, and miracle worker, and being his body found uncorrupted, in the year 1621-1622 the Ukrainian theologian wrote about him: "In Moldoviţa Monastery, Saint Basil the miracles worker".

Later on, on the place of the old church was erected a new one (1535), so that the holy relics of Pious Basil were placed, for a hundred years, in the new church. Then, because of the harshness of the times, they were placed in a secret location where they have been until today.

Saint All-Pious Father Basil, pray to God for us!

PIOUS AGAPIUS THE HERMIT
The Founder of Agapia the Older Monastery
(Century XV)[121]

Hermit Agapius is the first known hermit living in ascesis on the mountains bearing his name and he is the true founder of Agapia the Older Hermitage. This pious lived, initially, in the community of Neamţ Monastery, at the beginning of the Century XV, where he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood. Then, for loving the prayer and the hermit life, he withdrew himself in quietude on the mount separating Secu Monastery from Agapia Monastery.

On that mountain there were lonely glades and places which were very propitious to the hermit life. Here Pious Agapius lived in ascesis, alone, for many years, in fasting and in prayer, extolling God, day and night, and enduring many temptations from the devils. Then, his name became famous, so that a few disciples from Neamţ Monastery joined him, and they build wooden monastic sells for themselves, near to their teacher. Thus, here had coagulated the first and the most famous hermitage from around Neamţ Monastery.

For the number of the disciples was increasing, they needed a church for religious services on holidays. Then Pious Agapius built, together with his disciples, a small wooden church in the glade bearing his name, a church having as patron The Transfiguration of the Lord. So was born, around the middle of the century XV, "The Agapius's Hermitage", under the guidance of the great hermit. And his name reached to be so famous that many monks and laymen were visiting him, and they were asking him for useful words, and some of them wanted to become his disciples. That was because they were charmed by the living of Pious Agapius and by the good order from his hermitage. For the whole week his disciples were living in ascesis, alone, on the mountain, and on holidays they descended to the hermitage where they were taking vigil for the entire night and they officiated the Holy Liturgy and they

[121] Fr. N. Dărângă, *The History of Agapia Monastery*, Tg. Frumos, 1908, p. 40; *The Founders Remembrance List of Agapia Monastery*.

were imparted. After that, they went again to quietude, in order they to ceaselessly speak to God and to be they nourished out of the godlike love.

Reaching the age heralded by the Holy Ghost through the mouth of Prophet David, Pious Agapius the Hermit moved to the eternal life, being him counted in the group of the pious fathers, and he was buried near to the church. From this pious took their name the two monasteries: Agapia the Older and Agapia the Newer, as also the Agapius Creek.

Lord, please rest Pious Agapius and on his disciples in Your immortal Kingdom of Your love, for they sanctified these places by their sacrifice and love!

MONK PHILOTHEOS THE HYMNOGRAPHER
Cozia Monastery
(Centuries XIV-XV)

This loving-of-Christ monk is counted among the first known hymnographers form the Romanian monasteries. In the first place, he was chief of the voivodal chancellery of The Romanian Country, during the reigning of Mircea the Old. Philotheos was known also as Filos, for he was highly educated and knower of Grek and Slavonic.

In the year 1392, he renounced to his official position and to all the earthly things, and he took the cross of Christ and he became a monk at Cozia Monastery, being admitted there by Abbot Gavril. Then, after learning the good ascesis and the rule of the churchly services, he reached to be a famous chief singer and the first teacher and calligrapher in the community of Cozia and Cotmeana Monasteries.

Monk Philotheos founded the first school for calligraphers and copyists at Cozia, and he reached to be a teacher for the monks from Olt Valley. The sole work written by him and preserved until today, it is called as “Pripeale”, namely Hymns of Glory, which are song today in honor of the great saints at the religious service of the vigil in monasteries. Being a skillful chief singer and hymnographer, his Hymns of Glory spread, during the Centuries XV-XVIII in all Orthodox churches form Balkan Peninsula, towards the glory of God and of His saints[122].

[122] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, p. 216; Al. Piru, *The History of the Romanian Literature*, vol. I, 1970, pp. 14-15.

PIOUS GAVRIIL URIC THE WRITER
Neamţ Monastery
(Centuries XIV-XV)[123]

The worthy of being remembered Gavriil the Writer is counted among the first copyists of Philokalian writings from our country, and as one of the most skilled teachers, miniaturists, and calligraphers of the Romanian monasticism.

This highly educated monk was the son of Petru Ulric, a writer of voivodal bills at the court of Roman Muşat and Alexander the Kind. After Gavriil graduated the scribes' school from Bistriţa Monastery, he reached to be the chief-scribe at the Moldavia's chancellery. Then, after his father became a monk under the name Paisius the Uric at Bistriţa Monastery, his son Gavriil became a monk too, in the community of Neamţ Monastery, for he wanted to serve Christ from his youth. Their admission into monasticism took palce between the years 1407-1415, under Abbot Dometian, when was written the *Remembrance List of Bistriţa Monastery*. At f 6 r, at the mention no. 20 are written the followings: "Remember, Lord, Your sons, Monks Paisius Uric and his son, Monk Gavriil the Scribe".

The humble Monk Gavriil, being reckoned worthy of the holy priesthood, he devoted his years to copying patristic teachings and writings, both hagiographical and Philokalian writings. This was for he was endowed by God with much literacy, and with a beautiful style of spelling, and he knew Greek and Slavonic, and he was adorning the books with most exquisite miniatures. For almost 40 years, Monk Gavriil Uric was copying and adorning tens of manuscripts in Neamţ Monastery. Among these have been preserved until today only a few: *The Book of Four Gospels* (1429) in Slavonic and Greek, having unparalleled miniatures; *The Ladder* of Saint John Climacus; *The Pearl* of Saint John Chrysostom; and four volumes of hagiographical texts with excerpts from patristic teachings and from lives of saints, which guide the soul on the salvation path.

Monk Gavriil Uric is reckoned the first teacher, calligrapher, and writer of Philokalian writings from Moldavia. Studying the Byzantine manuscripts from Moldoviţa Monastery, brought form Constantinople by Alexander the Kind (From Studious Monastery), Monk Gariil founded at Neamţ and Bistriţa Monasteries a famous school for teachers, scribes, and copyists of patristic and cultic books. Through this teacher the spirit of the Holy Fathers and the Byzantine tradition entered the monasteries from Moldavia. His disciples spread, especially under the reigning of Stephen the Great, to all monasteries from Moldavia, as: Bistriţa, Putna, Moldoviţa, Voroneţ, Probota, Tazlău, and at the voivodal chancelleries.

So reckoned the humble Monk Gavriil the Writer to serve God, by enriching the Church of Moldavia and by helping to save human souls. Writer

[123] *The Remembrance List of Bistriţa Monastery*, 1407, Slavonic manuscripts, the Library of the Romanian Academia, f. 6 r.; C. Tomescu, *Short Historical Story about the Holy Neam Monastery*, 1942, p. 13.

and together-worker, teacher and fulfiller of the word of the Holy Gospel, who consummately fulfilled his obedience with the prayer and with the teaching with the good deed, into love and humbleness.

Finishing his life's trip and leaving in Moldavia numerous disciples, Pious Gavriil the Writer (Uric) yielded his soul, peacefully, in the arms of Christ, at around the middle of the Century XV.

Pious Silouan the Hieroschemamonk
Great Abbot of Neamţ Monastery
(1422-1448)[124]

Abbot Silouan was disciple of Metropolitan Iosif Muaşt, and of the Abbot Dometian (1407-1415), raised and educated in the community of the Neamţ Monastery. Here he learnt much in the school scribes of the monastery, from the great teacher and monk Gavriil Uric, and then he reached to be hieromonks and a skillful confessor.

In the year 1422, after Abbot Pimen died, the Pious Hieroschemamonk Silouan was, by the will of God, appointed as abbot of Neamţ Monastery. This great abbot led the monastery's community with a special dedication and spiritual skillfulness, for more than 25 years. He continued and fulfilled the spiritual work started by Abbot Dometian in both Neamţ and Bistriţa Monasteries.

In Neamţ Monastery Abbot Silouan increased the number of the monks, among whom many lived as hermits in the ancestral forests form around the monastery. Among those monks he raised confessors and pious abbots, famous all over Moldavia. In church he reinforced the good rule of the religious services, so that nowhere else the religious services were officiated more beautiful than here. The famous chief-singers from Neamţ Monastery rivaled with those from Athos and from Byzantium, so that the voivode himself, together with all his government, came and listened to them.

The hermit-like life experienced a great development never known before in Moldavia. Great hermits and workers of the Prayer to Jesus shone around Neamţ and Bistriţa Monasteries. The most famous hermit at the time of Abbot Silouan was Pious Iosif, who lives in ascesis together with 17 disciples, in the Bisericani Mountain.

The enlightened Abbot Silouan developed the scribes' school at Neamţ, led by Monk Gavriil Uric, and that school reached to be the most famous spiritual center from Moldavia, of patristic culture, of iconography and hagiography, of copying and ornamenting the cultic books. Here studied many scribes, monks, and laymen, among whom some of them became scribes, copyists, and miniaturists at the Moldavian monasteries. Under the guidance

[124] I. Creţulescu, *The Inscriptions of the Neamţ Monastery*, 1905; manuscript no. 171, f. 340, The Library of the Neamţ Monastery; C. Tomescu, *cited work*, pp. 12-13.

of Abbot Silouan were copied at Neamț several patristic writings having Philokalian content, among which: *The Ladder* of Saint John Climacus, *The Pearl* of Saint John Chrysostom, collections of Sayings, Lives of Saints etc.

Anso through the care of Abbot Silouan was embroiled with golden thread the Epitaph from Neamț (1437), renown in the whole country, and which bears his name. There were also built new monastic cells and other numerous renewals, and big donations were received. And as adviser of the pious Voivode Alexander the Kind and of his sons, Pious Silouan took part to all the joys and tribulations of that time from Moldavia. He participated to the burial service of the Voivode, in the year 1432, and he tried to reconcile the Voivode's descendants to the throne, for he was beloved and respected by all of them as a spiritual father.

After a long monastic ascesis, in fasting and in prayer, in patience, and in self-sacrifice for others' salvation, the Pious Abbot Silouan yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hands of God, in the year 1448, leaving behind numerous disciples.

PIOUS IOSIF FROM BISERICANI
Bisericani - Neamț Hermitage
(Century XV)[125]

Hieroschemamonk Iosif The Hermit became a monk at Bistrița Monastery. He went to the Lord's Tomb an became a famous hermit in the Jordan' s River's desert, so that hie name became known all over Judea. Around 17 hermits living in that country gathered around him, who were 15 Romanians and 2 Greeks. And Pious Iosif was a confessor and teacher to the hermits. Their ascesis was the uninterrupted prayer, and their shelter were the caves from River Jordan's Valley.

After an invasion of the Arabs to the Holy Land, and therefore Pious Iosif took his disciples and came to Moldova, at Bistrița Monastery. But he didn't stay there for long, because of loving the quietude, and he withdrew himself on a nearby high mountain that was called "Josif's Mountain", and later on it was called "Bisericani's Mountain". There all of them lives in ascesis in rock caves and in dwellings dug in the ground and covered with wood trunks, and they officiated the religious services in a bigger cave known until today. And Pious Iosif advances so much spiritually that he became miracles-worker.

Seeing that many other monks were coming to be his disciples, they erected a small wooden church having the patronage of the Good Anunciation, they build monastic cells around the church, and some of the monks gathered there. That hermitage was called, for a long time, as "Iosif's Hermitage" and it was one of the famous hermitages from Moldavia. Pious Iosif established in his hermitage the rule of uninterrupted prayer, according to the model of Studious Monastery from Constantinople. Thus, he divided the monks in three groups

[125] Hieromonk Ioanichie Bălan, *Romanian Saints*, p. 311; *The Remembrance List of Bisericani Monastery*.

and each group was extolling God, in the church, for eight hours. And in the monastic cells the rules were: singing the psalms, fasting, total obedience, and the love among brothers. Iosif's Hermitage was the only monastic settlement with the rule of uninterrupted prayer from our country. For such ascesis, Pious Iosif was honored by believers as saints while he was still alive, and he has been remembered locally until these days.

Later on, Iosif's Hermitage was called as Bisericani Hermitage, namely of the Pious ones, for the monks were ceaselessly praying with fasting and with tears and many believers got healed of ills with the blessing of the pious. So, living in a deep ascesis, Saint Iosif reached the measures of the fathers from yore, and so he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hands of the lord and he was counted in the group of the saints.

Saint All-Pious Father Iosif, pray to God for us!

PIOUS FATHERS SIMION, METHODIUS, BARNABA, PETER, AVERCHIE, GHERMAN, PIR, AND GREEK (?)
The Disciples of Pious Iosif from Bisericani
(Century XV)[126]

These pious fathers, together with other nine hermits whose names have been forgotten, they were the disciples of Pious Iosif from Jordan's River's Desert. Among those, five were Romanians, and the hieroschemamonk Pir and Greek (?) originated from Palestine.

Following their teacher, all these fathers came to Moldavia and lived as hermits on Bisericani Mountain, each one in a separate cave. Thus, Monks Simon lived as a hermit on a high mountain that has been called until these days as Simon's Mountain. The others lived as hermits on other mountain peaks, not far from the cave of Pious Iosif, and those caves too are called with their names. They were praying alone for the whole week, in harsh ascesis, and on holidays they gathered in the Pious's cave and they took vigil for the whole night.

After the foundation of the Iosif's Hermitage some of those ascetics descended to the community, while the Pious Simon, Metodius, Barnaba, Averchie, Pir, and Greek remained in wilderness until the end of their lives. And all of them loved Christ and worked the prayer of the heart, ceaselessly mediating for the salvation of the world and they shone on that mountain as some spiritual torches.

Around the end of the century XV, the 17 pious hermits from Bisericani Mountain moved to the heavenly dwelling places, and their holy relics were placed in the caved where they died. In the local toponymy we find today the following names: Simon's Mountain, Averachie's Mountain, Methodius's Mountain, Barnaba's Mountain, Pir's Mountain, and Greek's Mountain; and

[126] Fr. C. Matasă, *cited work*, pp. 79-80; Fr. Liviu Stan, *cited work*, p. 54; N. Stoicescu, *cited work*, pp. 72, 145.

starting with the Century XVII, were attested the names: Chiriac's Mountain and At Monastic Cells[127].

METROPOLITAN TEOCTIST I
Of Moldavia and Suceava
(1452-1477)[128]

The venerable Metropolitan Teoctist I was the "Moldavia's Father" for 25 years, and he was the closest praying one and adviser of Stephen the Great.

According to tradition, he originated from Muşat Family. Form his youth, he took the yoke of Christ and became a monk in Neamţ Monastery, the most renowned monastic hearth for spiritual education from the Centuries XV-XIX. Then, he learnt the fear of God and the dogmas of the faith from skillful monks, he was found worthy of receiving the gift of the priesthood, and he was for a while the abbot of the great monastery.

Voivode Peter Aron saw the wisdom and the holiness of the life of Abbot Teoctist, and he appointed him as Metropolitan of Moldavia in the year 1452. And in the spring of the year 1457, when Stephen the Great came on the throne of Moldavia, Metropolitan Teoctist was appointed, by the will of God, to anoint as rule of Moldavia the greatest voivode of the Romanian nation. This was for, after gathering the whole clergy and people at the place called "Justice, by the will of everybody they elected him Voivode and he was anointed by Metropolitan Teoctist", in the name of the All-Holy Trinity. Then all the people prayed together with him, in order him to the lord of the justice, valiant in wars, defender of the faith, confessor of Christ, and true father of Moldavia.

This wise metropolitan was the first adviser of Stephen the Great. When the country was menaced by wars, he was the first to be consulted. And when the voivode left for battle, the metropolitan ordered all the monks and the hermits to take vigil for the whole night, with fasting and prayer, until the voivode turned back victoriously, to Suceava. Also, when Stephen, by the lenience of God, turned back defeated in battle, as there was the Battle from Războieni (1476), Metropolitan Teoctist with his clergy were the first to encourage him and they urged him not to surrender the country. The same metropolitan was the one advising Stephen to erect a monastery after each war, as a sign of thank brought to God. At his advice, the great voivode built Putna Monastery (1466-1470), consecrated by himself on 3rd of September 1470. At his advice the voivode restored entirely the Zografu Monastery (1466-1475) and he sent many material help to monasteries from Mount Athos.

Under the shepherding of this pious metropolitan flourished the spiritual life in the monasteries from Moldavia, and there were founded numerous

[127] Hieromonk Ioanichie Bălan, *Hermitage Hearths*, p. 65.

[128] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1957, pp. 233-238; Fr. Prof. M. Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, Sibiu, 1972, p. 82; *The Chronicle of Grigore Ureche.*

hermitages along Carpathian Mountains, as the followings: Putna Hermitage, Voroneţ Hermitage, BIsericani Hermitage, Tazlău Hermitate etc. In all those settlements there lived highly spiritually advanced monks, among which some of them reached to work miracles and they were honored like saints by the people. The hesychastic life experienced at that time an unparalleled flourishing in Moldavia. Also, Metropolitan Teoctist raised numerous disciples, among whom some of them reached to be famous hierarchs, and others were famous abbots, as: Simeon and Silouan at Neamţ Monastery, Ioasaf, the first abbot from Putna, Eustatius from Bistriţa Monastery, Silverster and Teoctist at Moldoviţa, Gerontius at Humor, Fevronia at the Iţcani Monastery for nuns, Antonia from Horodnic, and may others. In the Monasteries Neamţ, Putna, Molvodiţa, Humor, and Preobota, in the same time with te monastic life, Metropolitan Teoctist developed also the schools for calligraphy, embroidery, sculpture, painting, miniature painting, and music.

It was so the shepherding of the good Metropolitan Teoctist for 25 years. The, being him summoned to the eternal life, he yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord, on 18th of November 1477, and he was cried by the whole people and buried under the porch of Putna Monastery.

SAINT DANIIL THE HERMIT
Voroneţ Monastery
(Century XV)[129]

a. His Life

Our Pious Father Daniil the Hermit was one of the greatest saints born in the land of Moldavia. He was a great teacher of the wilderness and an adviser of the monks.

This saint of our nation was born to a family of poor people on the estate of Saint Nichoals Monastery from Rădăuţi, at the beginning of the Century XV, being baptized as Dumitru. When he was 16, he became a monk in the same monastery, bearing the name David. After a few years of harsh ascesis he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, and he withdrew at the Saint Laurentius Monastery from the commune Upper Vicovu[130].Then, by being him called by the Holy Ghost to the hermit-like life, he became a schemamonk under the name Daniil, before the year 1450, and he lives in ascesis, on his own, in unknows ascesis, firstly in the neighborhood of Neam Monastery, and then on the Secu Creek Valley, and then on Putna River Valley, in small monastic cell carved in stone.

[129] Fr. Prof. Liviu Stan, *The Romanian Saints*, pp. 29-43; Fr. Prof. Petru Rezuş, "The Life and the Deeds of Saint Daniil the Hermit", in *Theological Studies*, 1956, no. 3-4, pp. 227-240; Archimandrite Nestor Vornicescu, „Stephen the Great and Daniil the Hermit", in *M.M.*, 1966, no. 7-8, pp. 566-573.

[130] Today, there is the Village Laura, a name derives from Laurentius, or from Lavra.

After Putna Monastery was consecrated (1470), Pious Daniil withdrew himself in the neighborhood of Voroneţ Monastery, where the monks form there carved for him a monastic cell in rock, under the peak of the Hawk. Here he lived in ascesis, on his own, for other 20 years, being pleasant to God, raising numerous disciples, and working meany healing miracles.

In the year 1488, after the building of the Voroneţ Monastery, Saint Daniil the Hermit descended to that community, for he was over 80, and he was elected abbot of that monastery. He lived a short time after that, honored by people as a saint and a miracle-worker. Pious Daniil yielded his soul in the hands of God somewhen around the year 1496, and he was placed into the church where he has been until today.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Saint Daniil the Hermit, being chosen by God from his mother's womb for the angelic life of the hermits, he proved himself to be a bearer of Christ since his childhood. For he never missed from the church, neither was he playing together with the other children, nor was he searching for resting or for food. But he was praying constantly, and he obeyed his parents in all things.

2. When he was around 10 years, he was given to be educated in the Saint Nicholas from Rădăuţi Monastery, the child Dumitru, though at a young age, he proved to be mature in his understanding. He learnt, in a short time, by heart, the Book of Hours and the Book of Psalms, as also the spiritual ascesis. For that, the monks loved him very much and they benefited of his gentleness and skillfulness, for he was always overshadowed by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

3. After five years of apprenticeship he became a monk, receiving the name of the great Prophet and Emperor David. And he was obedient in all things to the pious fathers, and he had a teacher and as confessor the great ascetic and bearer of God Holy Hierarch Leontius of Rădăuţi.

4. This young monk, David, he was very zealous in the ascesis of the monastic life. The most he loved was the quietude, the fasting, and the prayer. He didn't eat anything, daily, until sunset, and sometimes he totally fasted for three or even for five days in a row, and he ate only vegetables and herbs. When fulfilling his tasks, he was quiet, gentle, and obeying everybody, and he tarried in the church, day and night, as an unquenched candle. Aven in his monastic cell, he was sleeping only for a short time, sitting on a little chair, always taking vigil and thinking at the godlike things. And among the books he loved the Book of Psalms the most, he knew it by heart, and he repeated it daily.

5. He lived thus in ascesis for years. Pious David became a vessel of the Holy Ghost, being found worthy of the gifts of the priesthood and of working miracles. Hearing about the miracles worked by his prayers, many ill people ran humbled to Hieromonks David and they were healed of their sufferings. Others came to ask him for advice, for he was very wise and he knew the

future, and others came to confess their sins in front of him, for the pious reached to be a famous confessor in the Northern lands of Moldavia.

6. Hieromonk David saw himself surrounded by crowd and no longer having peace, and fearing the ghost of the vain-glory, he took blessing from the Bishop of Rădăuţi and he withdrew himself to the Saint Laurentius Monastery. But there too, the believers were searching for him, including people possessed by unclean ghosts. And Pious David obeyed their wishes and during the day he stood among people, while at night he was taking vigil, he was praying, and he was weaving wicker baskets for the community. So was the pious killing the temptations of his youth and the thought of the vain-glory.

7. On one occasion he was sent by the abbot with a certain task to the Siret City. There the pious was surrounded by people and he had to tarry a day there, to that he wasn't able to turn back to monastery in due time. The abbot gave him as penance not to leave the monastery for a while. So, Hieromonk David fulfilled his penance joyfully, extolling God for everything.

8. As a few years passed, the Pious David got strengthened much in his spiritual ascesis, and he felt that he was called by the Holy Ghost to the hermit-like life. His soul was wounded by his love for Christ and he wanted to extoll Him ceaselessly, together with the angels and with the hermits form the Carpathian Mountains' ancestral forests.

So, after receiving the blessing for doing that, from the Abbot of the Saint Laurentius Monastery, he put on the great and angelic image of the hermit, and he changes his name from David to Daniil. Then, by hiding himself from the world, he withdrew himself in the deeps of the ancestral forests from the Secu-Neamţ Valley, a short while before the year 1450, and he lived there in harsh monastic ascesis for 14 years. Then, seeing himself surrounded by people, he withdrew himself in the Noth of Moldavia, near to Putna Hermitage.

9. Guided by God, Pious Daniil built for himself, initially, a wooden shack on the Valley of Calf River. Then, after finding a rock nearby, he chiseled a small monastic cell in that rocky wall, barely enough large to contain him. He chiseled there also another small chamber, as chapel for praying, which can be seen even today. In this rock Pious Daniel lived, pleasant to God, for more than 20 years.

10. The ascesis of All-Pious our Father Daniil the Hermit, in his monastic cell from Putna, was the following:

Day and night he took ceaseless vigil in prayer and in cogitating at the godlike things, fasting until sunset. He didn't leave his monastic cell for the whole week. His food was composed of dry bread, roots, and herbs, and his handwork consisted of weaving wicker baskets. On Sundays he celebrated the Holy Liturgy and he imparted himself with the Body and with the Blood of Christ, and then he received the people who came to see him and ask him for healing and for advice. During fasting periods, he fasted for three or even for five days in a row, and he had the gift of the prayer and of the tears.

11. For the holiness of his life, for the prolonged periods of fasting, and for the vigils of whole night, with prayers and with tears, Pious Daniil the

Hermit was tempted by satan for a long time, trying to banish him from wilderness and to cast him in the dreadful sin of the vain-glory. But the Pious, by asking Christ for help, and with the power of the Holy Cross, he overcame all the traps of the devil. For that, in a short while, he was found worthy by God of the gift of the tears, of knowing the future, and of healing illnesses. So, he was banishing the unclean ghosts from people only by his word, and he was healing all sorts of ill people. Then he knew the hidden thoughts and he told to many the future secrets, for he was full of Holy Ghost.

12. For such gifts, the name of the pious became famous all over Moldova, and the people of all sorts of ages, counted him in the group of the saints, from his youth. Most of them called him Saint Daniil the Old Hermit, for he was a father and an adviser to all hermits from the North of Moldavia. Others, especially the monks, they were calling him as Saint Daniil the Hieroschemamonk. And after he passed away from body, he was called by the people as Saint Daniil the New, in order they to identify him apart from other pious monks bearing the same name Daniil.

13. In the year 1451, the voivode Bogdan died suddenly and his son Stephen barely escaped with his life, due to the fight for the throne. So, hearing about the ascesis and about the miracles worked by Saint Daniil the Hermit, and being in a great danger, Stephen was guided by the Holy Ghost to the monastic cell of Daniil the Hermit. Stephen tarried there for a few days, he confessed his sins before the pious, he received exoneration of his sins and many comforting words. The, after appeasing his soul, the great hermit blessed him and prayed for him, and then he prophesized that Stephen was soon to become voivode of Moldavia. And he let him go in peace.

14. In the spring of the year 1457, Stephen the Great was enthroned on Moldavia's throne, so that the prophecy of Saint Daniil the Hermit was proven true, and the fact that the ghost of God was within him. Since that year, the pious became the first adviser, confessor, and prayer to God, for Stehpen the Great. The voivode often visited his monastic cell, he confessed his sins, he asked him for useful words, and he didn't' do anything without the prayer and the blessing from Daniil. And the pious encouraged the voivode and urged him to defend the country and the Christendom against the pagans, and he assured him that if he built a church after each one of his battles, he will be victorious in all wars.

Thus, listening to him, Stephen the Great defended Moldavia and the Church of Christ with much valiance, after the fall of Byzantium, for almost a half of century, winning 47 wars and erecting 48 churches. Thus, Pious Daniil the Hermit proved to be a great defender of the Romanian Orthodoxy, and a spiritual founder of the monasteries erected at his advice.

15. Once, the voivode of Moldavia visited the monastic cell of the pious, and he was urged by the great hermit to build near to his monastic cell a monastery for monks, having as patronage the Dormition of the Mother of the Lord, Whom the hermit had great awe towards. So, Voivode Stephen listened to him and they chose the place together and, with his blessing, in the year 1466

started the building of Putna Monastery. And in the year 1470, when that godlike place was consecrated, himself Daniil the Hermit took part to it, being honored by everybody as the second founder.

16. They said about him also that Voivode Stephen wanted to appoint him at the leadership of the monastery and the Voivode asked him for several times to be abbot and spiritual father of Putna Monastery, but the pious reckoned himself as unworthy of such an honor, so that he remained further on in his small monastic cell from the cave.

17. For the holiness of his life, Pious Daniil the Hermit proved to be, from his youth, a bearer of Christ and a great teacher of the quietude and of the Prayer to Jesus. During his life, there weren't in Moldavia another more famous hermit and confessor, neither other more skilled worker and teacher of the prayer than him. That's why, all the abbots and the confessors from the North of Moldavia, as also the members of the government had him as their spiritual father.

18. Following the example of his life, numerous monks loving of quietude from the coenobitic communities withdrew themselves into wilderness with the blessing of Pious Daniil and they became hermits and advanced workers of the Prayer to Jesus. Thus, this great ascetic of Moldavia had in monasteries and in villages numerous spiritual sons, and on the mountains and in the forests, he had more than a hundred hermits living in ascesis and pleasant to God, according to his advice.

Rightly so, Saint Daniil the Hermit created in Moldavia a great hesychastic movement, an almost unparalleled one, renewing for a long time to come the spiritual life in monasteries, in hermitages, and raising a whole generation of hermits and of prayers of the nation.

19. After the year 1470, the Pious seeing that he no longer had peace at Putna Monastery because of the multitude of the believers visiting it, he left the monastic cell which he lived in ascesis for over twenty years, and he withdrew himself, secretly, in the ancestral forests from around Voroneţ Monastery. There were living in ascesis around fifty monks under the guidance of Hieroschemamonk Misail, a worthy disciple of Saint Daniil. So, he found a solitary place near to the monastery, and he made there a small monastic cell above the rock called The Hawk, and there the pious was living in ascesis in total quietude and being pleasant to God.

But after a while his name became known in all local villages, so that there were coming to see him all kinds of ill people, paralyzed, possessed by unclean ghosts, and they were healed. Because the believers couldn't reach his monastic cell, they waited for him down at the monastery, and the pious was descending at night, when they were praying, and he prayed together with them, he told them the cause of their suffering, he blessed them, and he sent them healthy to their homes.

20. In the summer of the year 1476, Stephen the Great, after losing the battle from Războieni, where he fought the Turks, he went to the monastic cell of Saint Daniil the Hermit from Voroneţ. So, "the voivode knocked on the door

of the monastic cell, but the hermit told him to wait outside until he finished his prayer. And after the hermit finished his prayer, he called Voivode Stephen inside and the voivode confesses his sins to him. And the voivode asked the hermit what should he do, because he no longer had the capability to fight the Turks, must he surrender the country to the Turks, or not? And the hermit told to the Voivode not to surrender the country, for he will win the war, but after he will win, he must build a monastery there, in the name of Saint George"[131].

So, the voivode believed the prophecy made by Daniil the Hermit, that he will defeat the Turks, and after taking prayer and blessing from him, he immediately gathered an army and he banished the Turks from the country. So was the pious helping with fiery prayers towards God, to be Moldavia and the Christian Countries delivered form the hand of the pagans.

21. After Metropolitan Teoctist died, in the autumn of the year 1477, Stephen the Great took council with the clergy and with the country's bishops and they decided to appoint as shepherd and as father of Moldavia Daniil the Hermit from Voroneţ. But the pious after hearing that, he prayer with tear to God and to the voivode not to estrange him from his happy quietude until his death. So, all of them were conquered by his humbleness, they ask him to forgive them, and they allowed him into wilderness to ceaselessly extoll God.

22. For 20 years as he lived as hermit to Voroneţ Monastery, Pious Daniil created there a new hesychastic hearth, equally important as that from Putna Monastery. For in a short time there gathered around him tens of hermits, who competed in their ascesis, and who were living in ascesis either in the ancestral forests from Voroneţ, or on the Buzău Mountains, or along the Eastern Carpathians. Most of them were practicing the Prayer to Jesus, the fasting, and the silence. Others were reading the Book of Psalms daily, others were doing prostrations and weaved wicker baskets, and others, who were good calligraphers, they were writing books for the religious service, for churches and monasteries. The most highly spiritualized disciples of Pious Daniil the Hermit were: Metropolitan Grigore Roşea, calligrapher monk John, and abbots Misail and Ephraem, all of them from Voroneţ Monastery; Pious Pachomius the Hermit and Abbot Nilus from Slatina Monastery; Abbot Paisius, Paladius the Hermit, and Anastasius the Hermit from Neamţ Monastery; Isaiah the Hermit from Moldovia Monastery; Abbot Gerontius from Humor, and many others.

23. In the summer of the year 1488 Stephen the Great remembered the promise he made to Saitn Daniil the Hermit, so that he built at Voroneţ Monastery a beautiful stone church consecrated to Saint Great Martyr Gregory, replacing the small wooden church from there. On 14th of September, in the same year, the church was consecrated by Metropolitan Gheorghe, in the presence of its blessed founders Voivode Stephen the Great and Pious Daniil the Hermit and in the presence of thousands of believers, monks, clergy, and members of the government. On the same day, after consulting the people

[131] Ion Neculce, *A Bunch of Words*, p. 107.

present there, Saint Daniil, though he was old, he was appointed as abbot of Voroneţ Monastery.

24. For almost 10 years Saint Daniil guided the community from Voroneţ Monastery, as a great spiritual father of the monks, of the hermits, and of the entire Moldavia. This was for, despite spending more time in his monastic cell from the Hawk Rock, for he loved the quietude so much, he descended often in the community, he took the confessions of the people, he healed the ill ones who gathered themselves up there, and he advised anyone. And then he withdrew again into his monastic cell.

25. During the time he served as abbot, Voroneţ Monastery experienced its most flourishing spiritual period ever, being reckoned, for a long time, as the spiritual hearth of the hesychasm from Moldavia. All the monks living in that community, around sixty monks, were practicing the Prayer to Jesus. Some of them were famous shepherds and confessors to the believers, others were teachers who learnt in the monastery's school, and they were tireless calligraphers, and most of them were monks of prayer, who extolled God ceaselessly and who prayed for the entire world. At Voroneţ Monastery were educated and accustomed to the spiritual life numerous parishioner priests, abbots, bishops, monks, hermits, and members of the government. And in the ancestral forests of Voroneţ Mountains, of Rarău, and of Stînişoara, there were living in ascesis, for the love for Christ, other over fifty hermits who were disciples of Saint Daniil. All of those were supervised and advised on the good path to the Kingdom of Heavens, by the great abbot and adviser of souls our Pious Father Daniil the Old Hermit.

26. Reaching to be a chosen vessel of the Holy Ghost, full of all kinds of good things, and crossing over the age of ninety, Saint Daniil the Great hermit of Moldavia, the teacher of the wilderness and the worker of miracles, he yielded his soul in the arms of Christ, at the end of the Century XV (1496). The multitude of his disciples, together with the metropolitan and with the voivode of the country, they mourn for him and they buried him in the narthex of the Voroneţ Church, sealing the tomb with a stone slab bearing the inscription: "This is the tomb of our father David, the Schemamonk Daniil". Then, after sharing to the participants many alms, and after kissing his holy relics, the believers turned back to their homes.

27. After his passing away, the disciples and the believers noticed that some miracles and healings were worked, at the holy relics of the pious, so that they passed him in the group of the saints, calling him as Saint Abbot Daniil, Saint Daniil the Hermit, or, more often All-Pious to God prayer our Father Daniil the New[132].

The community of Voroneţ Monastery, together with Metropolitan Grigore Roşea, his disciple, gave to that monastery, in addition to the patronage of Saint Great Martyr Gheorghe, a second patronage in the honor of Saint Daniil

[132] *Documents Regarding the History of Romania – Century XVI – A. Moldavia*, vol. III, Bucharest, 1951, p. 57, in the *Donation Act* from Voivode Jeremiah, on 17th of December 1599.

the New, remembering him among the blessed founders. In the same time, they appointed a celebration day, the next day after the remembrance of Saint Daniil the Pillar-Hermit, a third feasting day[133]. Thus, in Moldavia, the remembrance of Saint Daniil the Hermit has been done, for century, on 23rd of April, when celebrating the patronage of Voroneţ Monastery, and on 14th of December, on the third day after the remembrance-day of Saint Daniil the Pillar-Hermit (11th of December).

As saint with aura, he was painted for the first time in the year 1547, by the same metropolitan, on the southern wall of Voroneţ Monastery, to the left of the door from the porch, as it can be seen until today, holding in his hand an unrolled parchment having the following inscription: "Come brothers and listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord Wo is the man…".

28. The zeal of the believers urged the monks from Voroneţ Monastery, at the beginning of the Century XVII, to unbury the miracle-working holy relics of Saint Daniil the Hermit and to place them in the church, in a beautifully adorned coffin, for worshipping. These holy relics were kissed by Metropolitan Dositheos himself. The news about his miracles reached to Kiev, and to Poland, and to Transylvania, and to the Holy Mountain, from where were coming believers to bow themselves down in worship, and all of then were calling him as "Saint Daniil the New the Miracle-Worker".

29. In the year 1749, the abbot of Voroneţ Monastery, called Gideon, he gave to Putna Monastery the index finger of Saint Daniel, wrapped in silver, and it has been there until today. The holy-relics bear the inscription: "These relics have been wrapped by me, Gideon, Abbot of Voroneţ Monastery, on my expense, in the year 1749, December the 4th". In the year 1775, The North of Moldavia ended under Austrian occupation, so that the holy-relics of Saint Daniil the Hermit were placed in his tomb where they have been kept until today[134].

Saint All-Pious Father and miracle-worker Daniil, pray to God for us!

PIOUS MISAIL THE HIEROSCHEMAMONK
Abbot of Voroneţ Monastery
(Century XV)

Hieroschemamonk Misail was a close disciple of Saint Daniil the Hermit, since the years 1450-1460, when he was living inn ascesis in his monastic cell from Putna Monastery. Following to his teacher, Misail too lives for a while in ascesis in quietude, being a hermit on the Putna Valley. The, with the blessing of Pious Daniil, Misail together with several disciples settled themselves down

[133] Fr. Prof. Petru Răzuș, *cited work*, p. 235. According to tradition, Saint Daniil died on 14th of December.
[134] The last time when the holy-relics of Saint Daniil were unburied was in the summer of the year 1962, on the occasion of the restauration works undertook at Voroneț Monastery.

in Voroneţ Monastery, and there he lived in humbleness and in obedience to everybody.

Being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, Pious Misail was elected as abbot by the monastery's community, around the year 1470, and he was loved by every one of them due to his gentleness and wisdom which he was advising the souls towards Christ. In the year 1471, the Abbot Misail saw that Saint Daniil the Hermit was surrounded by too many people so that Daniil no longer had peace at Putna, he secretly brought Daniel to Voroneţ Monastery. Then the monks from Voroneţ Monastery carved for Daniil a monastic cell in the rock under the peak of the Hawk, according to the desire of the pious, Misail also appointed disciples to take who took good care of him, and Misail never disobeyed Daniil.

Advising the Voroneţ Monastery for more than ten years, Abbot Misail made of his community the most famous hermitage from Moldavia. Numerous monks and hieromonks loving the quietude, who wanted to live near Saint Daniil, they settled themselves down in the community of the Voroneţ Monastery, obeying Abbot Misail. Between the years 1470-1480 were living in ascesis in that hermitage more than 60 monks, and there were also other 50 hermits living in the ancestral forests form around Voroneţ Monastery. All of them were supervised by Abbot Misail, by the prayer and by the blessing of Saint Daniil. Some of those monks were working the Prayer to Jesus, others were consummately obedient and fasting, others were good calligraphers, teachers in the monastery's school, and humble servants in the community, comforting with love the believers coming to see Saint Daniil.

After the year 1480, Pious Misail receive the monastic scheme and he withdrew himself to quietude, praising God, day and night. Then, after a while, he passed away peacefully, and he was counted in the group of the pious fathers[135].

PIOUS EPHRAEM THE HIEROSCHEMAMONK
Abbot of Voroneţ Monastery
(Centuries XV-XVI)[136]

Hieroschemamonk Ephraem was one of the close disciples of Saint Daniil the Hermit. He was spiritually educated in the neighborhood of Daniil, at Putna Monastery, where he lived in ascesis in his youth. Then he settled down himself at the Voroneţ Hermitage, where he received the gift of the priesthood and he was serving faithfully and zealously the Church of Christ. In the community everybody loved him. Especially for his humbleness and for his

[135] I. Bogdan, *The Documents of Stephen the Great*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1913, p. 166; Archimandrite Nestor Vornicescu, *Stephen the Great and Daniil the Hermit…*, p. 43.
[136] I. Bogdan, *The Documents of Stephen the Great*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1913, p. 166; Fr. Prof. Petru Rezuș, *cited work*, pp. 277-240.

obedience to Saint Daniil, for he never disobeyed the old man, and he did everything with blessing.

After the year 1480, Abbo Misail withdrew himself to quietude, so that he entrusted the community of Voroneț Monastery to hieroschemamonk Ephraem. For almost ten years, the new abbot advised that exquisite hermitage with much skillfulness, advising and being himself an example to everybody of patience and steadfastness. He developed the school of calligraphers form the monastery and he took a special care of Saint Daniil who was living as hermit near to the monastery.

This pious abbot was one of Stephen the Great's advisers, and he was teacher and spiritual father to many. The same abbot was found worthy, in the year 1488, to see at Voroneț Monastery a new stone church, erected by the great voivode in the honor of Saint Great Martyr George.

Then, as the council of the community decided, Pious Daniil was appointed abbot to Voroneț Monastery, and Abbot Ephraem was obeying Daniil in everything, until the pious moved to the heavenly dwelling places. Ephraem lived a few more years after Daniil died, and he was pleasant to God, and in the first years of Century XVI passed away peacefully, leaving behind, at Voroneț Monastery, more than 60 monks.

PIOUS JOHN THE MONK
Voroneț Monastery
(Centuries XV-XVI)

This humble ascetic came to monastery when he was a child, and he weas one of the disciples who took care of Saint Daniil the Hermit monastic cell, and he fulfilled this task for more than fifteen years. He was advising the believers at the monastic cell of the great hermit, he was helping the ill people coming to be healed, he was bringing the food, and at the due time he was attending the church and he was loved by everybody for his gentleness.

When he was 18, he was made monk, taking the yoke of Christ at the urge and at the "prayers of our Saint Father Daniil the New…". He was very loved by the pious who ceaselessly was praying for his disciple and guising him on the path of the salvation. After his teacher and spiritual father passed away, Monk John occupied himself with the copying of churchly books, for he was a good calligrapher. Later on, he lives in ascesis for a while at Probota Monastery, and then he lived in obedience to Metropolitan Grigore Roșea († 1570), whom he was disciples together with, to Saint Daniil.

Among the books copied by John there is also one having a patristic content: *The Words of Saint Ephraem the Syrian*, copied by the humble calligrapher around the year 1550, for the monastery where he became a monk. He wrote on that copy: "… with the teaching of Metropolitan Grigorie… I wanted with the whole my heart and I paid with my honestly earned money

and I made this book, called of Saint Ephraem, and I gave it to Voroneţ Monastery… where from early youth and childhood I promised myself to God, by the prayers of our Saint Father Daniil the New and where I received the savior and angelic image…"[137].

So, after he withdrew from his task, he lived for a few more years and then he moved to the heavenly dwelling places.

PIOUS IOSAPHAT THE ARCHIMANDRITE
The First Boot of Putna Monastery
(1470-1484)

Archimandrite Iosaphat was the first abbot and spiritual founder of Putna Monastery. Called by Christ, firstly in the community of Neamţ Monastery, where he received the monastic tonsure, he was spiritually educated near to the most exquisite fathers of the great monastery. Here Pious Iosaphat was educated by the disciples of the famous teacher Gavriil Uric, so that he learnt well Greek and Slavonic, as also the craftsmanship of copying churchly books. And he was honored by the entire community of monks for his wisdom and obedience.

In the year 1440, Monk Iosaphat was ordained priest and he reached to be a skillful confessor in Neamţ Monastery, advising many souls towards Christ. His name became known even to Teoctist the Metropolitan of Moldavia, and even to the members of the government. For his holiness, he was elected by the community to be abbot and spiritual father of the Neamţ Monastery, and he made some improvements to the church and he strengthened much the love and the harmony among brothers. Abbot Iosaphat developed the school of calligraphers and the spiritual life from Neamţ Monastery. His community counted more than 200 monks, among whom more than 30 were famous teachers, psalms-singers, calligraphers, and confessors. Around the great monastery there were living in ascesis, tens of hermits and worker of the Prayer to Jesus.

Hearing about his ascesis, in the year 1468, Stephen the Great called him, with the blessing of Metropolitan Teoctist, to be abbot of the Putna Monastery. Thus, the archimandrite Iosaphat, taking with himself around 25 advanced monks, hieromonks, confessors, and a few calligraphers, he went to Putna, which was the foundation of the Great Voivode of Moldavia, and which was at that time being built. After the monastery was finished, on 3rd of September 1470, it was consecrated during a big festivity, in the presence of its founder, Stephen the Great, and of thousands of Moldavians.

Since that day, Abbot Iosaphat became secret adviser of the voivode and spiritual father of Putna Monastery, for 15 years. Having a totally special ascesis and being endowed by God with much power in word and in deed, he

[137] *Ibid*, p. 235.

succeeded, in a short time, to fund at Putna a community counting more than 60 monks, known all over Moldavia Country. The religious services and the whole activity proceeded as they were at Neamţ Monastery. The monks, the great founder's praying people, they have only the following duties: that of ceaselessly extolling Christ and o pray for the country and for the voivode's victory in wars, and in their spare time they were copying religious service and teaching books.

Pious Abbot Iosaphat founded at Putna, at the command of Stephen the Great, a famous school of calligraphers, comparable to that from Neamţ Monastery, where were copied service and teaching books. He also founded a school of teachers and of catechizers, for the teaching and enlightening of the people, as also a famous school of churchly music. From there were raised abbots and skillful hierarchs in advising the human souls, teachers and chiefs-psalms-singers who were adorning the religious service sin the monastery, especially on holidays.

Committing all the things well, Pious Iosaphat withdrew from being abbot in the year 1476 and he became a schemamonk, under the name of Iosif. Then, being pleasant to God, he moved peacefully to the heavenly dwelling places, on 218th of October 1484[138].

PIOUS CASSIAN THE MONK
Putna Monastery
(Century XV)

This worthy to be remembered father was one of the most famous calligraphers and adorners of books from Putna Monastery. He was tonsured in monasticism in Neamţ Monastery, where he was living for many years in ascesis and in obedience, being pleasant to God. There, in the school of calligraphers of the great monastery, Monk Cassian learnt from the most skillful teachers and miniaturists both the Greek and Slavonic languages, as also the copying and the adorning with miniatures of the books for service. Thus, in a short time, he became a renown calligrapher-monk in Neamţ Monastery, copying patiently and thoroughly numerous manuscripts. His name became known in the monasteries from Moldavia.

Hearing about that, Voivode Stephen the Great wanted to endow with service books his foundation from Putna which was being built at that time, so he ordered to Monk Cassian to copy, in the first place, the *Menaion* on August, with the service of the patronage of the monastery, the Dormition of the Mother of the Lord. At the page no. 44 one can see the following note: "This *Menaion* on August was written by Voivode Stephen, the ruler of Moldavia Country, by the hand of sinner Cassian". The copy of the *Menaion* was finished probably in the

[138] Prof. Dimitrie Stan, *The Putna Monastery and Commune*, Bucharest, 1905; *The Archive and the Remembrance List of Putna Monastery*; M. Costăchescu, *Moldavian Documents*, vol. I-II, 1935.

year 1466. A year later, namely in the year 1467, Pious Cassian copied and adorned, at the request of the great voivode, the second *Menaion* on November.

Coming to Putna together with Abbot Iosaphat, Monk Cassian was among the first teachers and miniaturists who founded the famous school of calligraphers from that Monastery. There he copied other churchly books as well, and he taught several disciples whom continued this spiritual occupation.

Living in this ascesis for around 50 years, and always praying and adorning churchly books towards the glory of God, towards the end of the century XV he passed away peacefully in the community of Putna Monastery[139].

PIOUS BASIL THE MONK
Putna Monastery
(Century XV)

Among the five calligrapher monks brought in the year 1470 from Neamţ Monastery, to Putna, it was also this humble teacher and monk Basil. He knew well the writings of the Holy Fathers, especially those writing belonging to the pious fathers from Sinai, starting with *The Ladder* written by Saint John Climacus. He knew the Philokalian writings which were circulating in the monasteries from Athos and from the former Byzantium, and he knew how much spiritual benefit those writings could offer to the monks from Moldavia, himself being a profound hesychast.

Thus, monk Basil is reckoned as one of the best hesychasts teachers of the school of calligraphers from Neamţ Monastery. He copied several Philokalian books, for the souly benefit of the monks from that community and from the hermitages, being one of the founders of the Philokalia within the Romanian space. In the same time, he was a skilled worker of the Prayer to Jesus and a good calligrapher.

Reaching at Putna Monastery and being known to the great Voivode Stephen the Great, Pious Basil received order to write, for voivode's foundation, *The Ladder* of Saint John Climacus, in order "people who pray not to be deprived" of such a gift. This was for there wasn't any Orthodox monastery lacking *The Words* of Saint John, who was the abbot of Mount Sinai, his Philokalia work being widely spread. Monk Basil fulfilled the order he received, and he added on the page no. 269 this note: "At the commandment of rightly-worshipper our lord Io Stephen Voivode, lord of Moldavia Country, son of Bogdan Voivode, it has been written this ladder for his monastery from Putna, in this monastery, during the time of sir Archimandrite Iosaphat, by the hand of much sinner Monk Basil, in the year 1472".

[139] Prof. Dimitrie Dan, *cited work*, pp. 69-81; Victor Brătulescu, "Miniatures and Manuscripts from Putna Monastery", in M.M., XLII (1966), no. 7-8, pp. 474-475.

In time the bonding of the book had worn out, because of being that book much read by monks, so that in the year 1646 that book was bonded again by Hieromonk Anthony, as himself mentioned it on a note on the same page: "Lo that I, the servant of Lord Jesus Christ, much sinner and unworthy Hieromonk Anthony, I have bonded and I have renewed this ladder, by obeying a commandment, in the year 1674, August the 13th".

Pious Basil was among the first teachers of the school of calligraphers from Putna Monastery, writing also other Philokalian books for souly benefit and raising several disciples. Then, being well-pleasant to God, he moved, peacefully, in the group of the pious fathers, towards the end of the Century XV[140].

PIOUS NICODEMUS THE HIEROMONK
Putna Monastery
(Century XV)

Hieromonk Nicodemus became a monk at Neamț Monastery. Learning from the disciples of the famous Garviil Uric the craftsmanship of painting miniatures and of copying churchly books, Pious Nicodemus reached to be one of the most skilled calligraphers and miniaturists from Neamț Monastery. He occupied himself both with the ascesis of the monastic life and with the prayer, and also with copying spiritual teaching books. At that time there were living in Neamț Monastery famous teachers and calligraphers who were copying the teaching of the Holy Fathers, for the community the, for those writings composed the spiritual nourishment of the monks and of the believers.

This pious hieromonk was, also, a skillful spiritual father for monks and for laymen, talking to everybody about Christ and helping to the salvation of many souls.

In the year 1470, he went to Putna Monastery with Abbot Iosaphat, and there he received a commandment from Stephen the Great to copy a *Book of the Four Gospels* for Humor Monastery, and he finished that copy on 17th of June 1473. The beautiful miniatures, icons, ornaments, and the entire calligraphy, make of this manuscript the most precious *Book of the Four Gospels* preserve in our country to these days. The Icon of the Mother of the Lord and of the four Evangelists, as also the portrait of Stehpen the Great, are of a great value, for they couldn't have been worked so beautifully but by the blessed hand of a pious monk. And that monk was Pious Nicodemus from Putna.

Hieromonk Nicodemus, living in this ascesis and teaching, and being well-pleasant to God, he moved peacefully to the eternal life, towards the end of

[140] Prof. Dimitrie Stan, *cited work*, pp. 76-77; Prof. V. Brătulescu, *cited article*, pp. 460-510; *The Archive and the Remembrance List of the Founders of Putna Monastery*.

the Century XV, leaving behind a few manuscripts beautifully adorned, and several spiritual sons[141].

PIOUS CHIRIAC THE SCHEMAMONK
Putna Monastery
(Century XV)

Schemamonk Chiriac lived in ascesis for many years at Neamţ Monastery, occupying himself both with the prayer and with the writing of the patristic books. He knew well the Greek and the Slavonic languages, and he loved the quietude and the loneliness. he belonged to the school of calligraphers from Neamţ Monastery, being one of the disciples of Monk Gavriil Uric.

In the year 1470 he went to Putna Monastery together with Abbot Iosaphat, where Pious Chiriac received commandment form the Lord of Moldavia to copy for his foundation *The Speeches of Saint John Chrysostom*, a copy finished by Chiriac in a few months. That book has been preserved at Putna Monastery until today. That book was read, for the comforting of the brothers, both in church and at the monastic cells. On the last page there is a note: "I. the much sinner Chiriac, I wrote this book of Saint John Chrysostom for the rightly-worshipper lord of the whole Country of Moldavia, Io Stephen Voivode, at the monastery built by him and named Putna, in the year 1470, and I have finished it on 30th of January".

Schemamonk Chiriac copied other Philokalian books too, containing teachings of the Holy Fathers, useful for the soul. He was among the first teachers of the school for copyists and calligraphers form Putna Monastery. Together with the other monks who came from Neamţ Monastery, they founded a highly spiritualized life at Putna, educating numerous disciples who loved Christ and who were enlightened in the Holy Scriptures.

After living thus in ascesis for more than 60 years, in humbleness and in obedience, and toiling much for the benefit and for the salvation of everybody, Pious Chiriac yielded his soul in the hands of God, towards the end of the century XV[142].

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[141] I. Bogdan, "The Gospels from Humor and Voroneţ from the years 1473 and 1550", *The Annals of the Romanian Academia*, 1907, p. 647; Prof. V. Brătulescu, *cited work*, pp. 460-510.

[142] *The Archive and the Remembrance List of Putna Monastery*; Prof. V. Brătulescu, *cited work*, p. 460-510; Fr. Dimitrie Dan, *Putna Monastery and Putna Commune*, 1905, pp. 77-78.

PIOUS JACOB THE HIEROMONK
Putna Monastery
(Century XV)

Pious Hieromonk Jacob was among the famous confessors and teachers of Neamţ Monastery, from Century XV, where he was living in ascesis, in his youth, as disciple of the renowned teacher Gavriil Uric. In Neamţ Monastery he copied a few patristic books for comforting and for spiritual nourishing of the monks from there.

Coming to Putna Monastery, in the year 1470, as teacher and as confessor, Hieromonk Jacob continued the same holy task and he educated, spiritually, tens of young monks. He was giving himself as example to everybody, and he accustomed them especially to humbleness, to obedience, and to prayer, nourishing them with the sweeter than honey words of the Holy Fathers. This was for Hieromonk Jacob was a knower of the Philokalian writings and he became a skillful calligrapher.

Knowing him well and honoring him for his ascesis, Voivode Stephen the Great asked him to copy *The Life of the Saints and of the Martyrs* on April-May, for the community of Putna Monastery, and he immediately produced as copy of that. On one of the pages of that book Hieromonk Jacob wrote: "The rightly-worshipper and loving of Christ Io Stephen Voivode, by the mercy of God Lord of the Country of Moldavia, son of Voivode Bogdan, he commanded to be written this *Life of the Saint* for Putna Monastery, during the time of Archimandrite Iosaphat the Abbot, by the hand of the sinner Hieromonk Jacob, in the year 1474, May the 20th"[143].

This pious confessor helped much to be founded the community and the school from Putna Monastery, being one of the most important teachers and calligraphers. So, after copying a few books and leaving behind several disciples, he yielded his soul in the hand of the lord, towards the end of the century XV.

PIOUS ATHANASIUS THE TEACHER
Moldoviţa Monastery
(† 1490)[144]

Pious Hieroschemamonk Athanasius was the most famous abbot, teacher, and spiritual father of Moldoviţa Monastery from the second half of the Century XV.

[143] *M. B. no. 311571 / 551*, page no. 39 v., Library of Putna Monastery.
[144] Ioan Iafu, "Moldovița Monastery – A very Important Center from the Period of the Romanian Culture in the Slavonic Language" (Centuries XV-XVIII), in *IJTL*, no. 7-8, 1965, pp. 428-456; Șt. Balș, V. Nicolescu, *Moldovița Monastery*, Bucharest, 1966.

Originating form Suceava Country, he took the yoke of Christ upon himself, form his youth, becoming a monk at Moldoviţa Monastery. Here he learnt form the pious monks and teachers of the monastery both how to copy manuscripts and the ascesis by fasting, by taking night vigils, by cogitating at the godlike things, and by ceaselessly praying. Then, being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, he reached to be spiritual father to many monks and local believers.

Between the years 1462-1490 Pious Athanasius was abbot of Moldoviţa Monastery, a renowned foundation of Voivode Alexander the Kind, dating from the year 1402. And he was so skilled at advising the monks that many hermits and young man from villages gathered around him. Some of them were learning the craftsmanship of the Prayer to Jesus, of the silence, and of the humble cogitation. Others were learning the writings of the Holy Fathers, and others learnt how to translate from Greek and from Slavonic and how to copy books for religious service, towards the praise of our Savior Jesus Christ. The name of Abbot Athanasius reached to be known by the great lord Stephen of Moldavia. Voivode Stephen reckoned Pious Athanasius among the first people praying for him, so that Voivode Stephen did many donations for monks' maintenance and food.

Pious Athanasius was also a skilled calligrapher, "the oldest known until now at Moldoviţa Monastery". He taught, also, several calligrapher disciples, organizing at Moldoviţa Monastery one of the most renowned schools of calligraphers from Moldavia, in addition to those from Neamţ and Putna Monasteries".

Living thus in ascesis, Pious Athanasius the Teacher and the Abbot, and being him well-pleasant to God, he moved to the heavenly dwelling places in the salvation year of 1490, leaving at Moldoviţa Monastery a community counting numerous monks.

PIOUS STAHIE THE ARCHIMANDRITE
Abbot of Probota Monastery
(Century XV)

Archimandrite Stahie, a secret adviser of Voivode Stephen the Great, he was the most important abbot of Probota Monastery from Century XV. Biewng a monk advances in good deeds and a skilled confessor in advising the human souls, in the year 1460 he was elected abbot of Probota Monastery, a monastery that is an old foundation of Muşat Dynasty, on the Siret River Valley, and he led that monastery, with much fear of God, for more than ten years. Gathering around him a community of more than 60 monks, he taught all of them the humbleness, the obedience, and the love for Christ. And for the enlightenment of the mind he founded at Probota Monastery a famous school

that educated many taught teachers, abbots, calligraphers, and especially priests for villages.

Stephen the Great saw that the church of his ancestors was in danger of collapsing because of a landslide, at the urge of Abbot Stahie, he built nearby a new monastery with a church and with monastic cells for the monks. The church, placed under the patronage of Saint Hierarch Nicholas, destined to be a voivodal necropolis, it was consecrated in the presence of the voivode before the year 1465.

In the year 1465, the mother of the voivode, Lady Oltea, feeling her end near, she was made a nun by pious Stahie under the name Mary. Then, she died in the same year, and she was buried in the church's crypt, by the community of the fathers. At the religious service of the burial was present the voivode himself, and Metropolitan Teoctist, and all the government members of Moldavia. After a year died also the wife of the voivode, Evdochia, and she was placed by Abbot Stahie in the same crypt.

So lived Abbot Stahie in ascesis until the year 1472, and he renewed entirely Probota Monastery, and strengthening in the community the love and the zeal for the godlike things. Then, he appointed abbot one of his disciples, he was for many years spiritual father, advising on the salvation path numerous monks and laymen. For he was a famous confessor all-over Moldavia and he had disciples in monasteries, cities, and villages.

So, reaching at the end of his life, Pious Stahie gave to everybody the last kiss, and then he entrusted his soul, peacefully, in the arms of Christ.

PIOUS GERONTIUS THE HIEROSCHEMAMONK
Abbot of Humor Monastery
(Century XV)

Humor Monastery, built at the beginning of the reigning of Alexander the Kind, it was, for centuries in a row, together with the other Romanian monasteries, a highly spiritualized hearth of spiritual living in Northern Moldavia.

During the reigning of Voivode Stephen the Great, Humor Monastery reached to be famous especially under Abbot Gerontius. This pious father was among the secret advisers of the great voivode. In his youth he was a disciple of Saint Daniil the Hermit, while Daniil was living as hermit in the Laura-Rădăuți Hermitage. Then, being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, and living for several years in Humor Monastery, he reached to be appointed abbot of this holy place, before the year 1470.

Abbot Gerontius became a famous confessor of that place, and he attracted to his monastery numerous believers, priests, and monks, whom he strengthened in the right-faith and he advised them on the path to salvation. Some of his spiritual sons reached later on to be good priests, hermits, and skilled monks.

Under the leadership of this pious father Humor Monastery experienced an epoque of high spiritual flourishing. Its community counted 40 monks, among whom some were good ascetics, confessors, teachers, and calligraphers. In the school of this monastery were also educated young men for becoming priests and pulpit singers for villages.

The Voivode of Moldavia, seeing the life of Abbot Gerontius, he visited him often and asked for his advice. Then, because the voivode saw the church as lacking some necessary things, he gave many donations, including cultic objects, to this place that is under the patronage of the Dormition of the Mother of the Lord. The most important gift bestowed by Stehphen the Great to Humor Monastery was *The Book of the Four Gospels*, written at his command by Hieromonk Nicodemus from Putna Monastery, on 17th of June 1473. On the cover of that book, the calligrapher painted Voivode Stephen kneeled, offering his donation to the Mother of the Lord. This *Book of the Four Gospels* has been preserved, with holiness, until these days, as one of the most precious jewelries created and hosted by the pious monks in the Romanian monasteries.

HERMITS ON THE SUCEVIŢA VALEY
Suceviţa Monastery
(Century XV)

On the valley of Suceviţa Creek, a creek springing out of Great Obcina Mountain, there lived in ascesis pious hermits ever since the Century XIV. In the tradition of that place, they say that, around the middle of the Century XV, there were living in ascesis in the isolated forests of Suceviţa, a few hermits loving of Christ. As monastic cells they had small wooden shacks, covered with soil. Also, the church where they were praying was made of tree trunks.

This was the first hermitage on the Vally of Suceviţa Creek, erected in the second half of the Century XV, and the hermits from under the peak of Great Mare were the first ascetics inhabiting that hermitage. In that hermitage lived hermits adorned with many good deeds, as humbleness, silence, and ceaseless prayer. Their names forgotten by people remained written in the eternity's book. Around that hermitage lived in ascesis several anchorites who were highly spiritualized in piousness. They were descending to the hermitage only on Sundays in order to receive the Holy Mysteries, and after that they were hiking the mountain again to their monastic cells dug in the ground. Later on, after that hermitage got scattered, it was renewed in the Century XVI by Pious Calistrat the Hermit[145].

[145] Dimitrie Dan, *Suceviţa Monastery,* Bucharest, 1923, pp. 6-8.

Pious Fathers

From the centuries XV-XVI

ARCHIMANDRITE GREGORY
Bistriţa-Neamţ Monastery
(1490-1500)[146]

Archimandrite Gregory was one of the great abbots of Bistriţa Monastery. He was raised form an early age by the community of this monastery, as disciple of Abbot Eustatius (1455-146) from whom he learnt the fear of God and the good ascesis. He learnt Greek and Slavonic at the calligraphers' school existing there, and he reached to be a skilled teacher and confessor of the monastery.

For the holiness of his life Pious Gregory was elected in the year 1490 as abbot of Bistriţa Monastery, which he spiritually guided for 10 years. He was honest and searched for by everybody, being wise in words and gentle in heart and there was no other confessor more skilled that him in that monastery. Due to that, he was counted among the secret advisers of Stephen the Great. At the urge of this abbot, Voivode Stephen buried his son Alexander (1493) at Bistriţa Monastery. At the urge of the same abbot Stephen built there a new belfry (1498) and he donated two bells and other many things to the monks praying here for him.

During his time as abbot, the spiritual life from monastery was much renewed. From among his disciples, he raised taught teachers, abbots, and good confessors, searched for both by monks and by laymen. He encourages much the hesychastic life there, helping to the settlement of the hermitages of Pious Iosif on the Bisericani Mountain and of Pious Simeon from Pângăraţi. He also helped to be founded the Tazlău Monastery, by sending there a few advanced monks.

Reaching the end of his life, Pious Abbot Gregory received the angelic image of the schemamonk, and he passed away peacefully, at the beginning of the Century XVI.

PIOUS CALISTRAT THE HERMIT
Sucevița Monastery
(Centuries XV-XVI)[147]

Hieroschemamonk Calistrat was one of the disciples of Saint Daniil the Hermit, while Daniil was living in ascesis at Voroneţ Monastery. So, after he learnt from his teacher the craftsmanship of the spiritual fight, Hieroschemamonk Calistrat withdrew on the Valley of Sucevița Creek, where there were living in ascesis a few monks withdrawn from the world, and there the pious Calistrat lived as hermit, being well-pleasant to God, for many years.

[146] *The history of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I. p. 274.
[147] Dimitrie Dan, *cited work*, pp. 8-9 and 11.

Being the news spread about this blessed hermit, there gathered around him several monks loving the quietude. But they didn't have a church where they could officiate the Holy Mysteries, for they were poor and living as big distance form villages. But by the prayers of Pious Calistrat there happened the following miracle: on all Sundays at the time of the Matins, namely at midnight, there were seen many torches, and all-wonderful priests and deacons were singing the canon of the Resurrection of Christ above a small glade". Then the pious built in that glade a wooden church under the patronage of the Resurrection of the Lord and, gathering there all the hermit from around, he founded the Sucevița Hermitage, towards the end of the century XV.

This was the second hermitage on the Valley Sucevița Creek called Calistrat's Hermitage. The first abbot of this hermitage was himself its founder, Hieroschemamonk Calistrat, a famous hermit and confessor from the North of Moldavia. The Blessed Calistrat had also the gift of the prayer, of knowing the future, and of banishing the unclean ghosts from within people, being honored by everybody as a miracles-worker. Then, he finished his trip of this life, and he moved peacefully to the group of the pious fathers, leaving at Sucevița Hermitage a highly-spiritualized community counting 30 monks.

PIOUS SIMEON THE HERMIT
The Founder of Pîngărați Monastery
(Century XV)[148]

This renown hermit was firstly living in ascesis in the community of Bistrița Monastery. Then he heard about Pious Iosif and his 17 disciples, who were living in consummate ascesis on the Bisericani Mountain nearby, and he wanted to follow their life, so that he withdrew with two disciples on the Pîngărați Creek's Valley, to a small glade near Păru Mountain. There they made monastic cells dug in the soil and covered in wood logs, and they lived there is harsh ascesis and in love for God for 29 years, earning many good deeds and especially the prayer, the tears, and the gift of knowing the future.

Thus, the name and the deeds of Pious Simeon had become known to everybody, even to himself the great Voivode Stephen of Moldavia, who honored Simeon as a great prayer-worker of his, together with Saint Daniil the Hermit. In the year 1461, Voivode Stephen came to Bistrița Monastery and he heard that Blesses Simeon, one of the monks praying for him, had no church which him to pray to God in together with his disciples, he sent his administrator from Tîrgu Pietrei, with craftsmen and money, and they erected in Simeon's Glade a church they placed under the patronage Saint Great Martyr Dimitrius.

[148] *The Remembrance List of the Founders of Pîngărați Monastery*; *Book with Texts from the Scriptures*, manuscript no. 30 (9) from the Library of the Oltenia's Metropolitanate, year 1808, written at the Older Agapia Monastery by Monk Methodius; Hieromonk Ioanichie Blan, *Romanian Saints*, p. 315.

For a long time, this hermitage was called Simeon's Hermitage, and later on it was known as Pîngăraţi Monastery.

Hearing about the passing away of Pious Simenon in Transylvania, Stephen the Great was very sad for that, because he loved Simeon as a true saint.

PIOUS ARCHIMANDRITE PAISIUS
The Second Abbot of Putna Monastery
(† 1502)[149]

This archimandrite, called as "Paisius the Short", he was the second abbot of Putna Monastery. He too became a monk at Neamţ Monastery. Later on, he came to the foundation of Stephen the Great in the year 1470, in the same time with Abbot Iosaphat, and after Iosaphat died, Paisius was elected abbot by the assembly of the monks from there. And he guided Putna Monastery with much wisdom for 26 years, staring with the summer of the year 1476.

Abbot Paisius observed all settlements and rules and he accomplished the spiritual work of his predecessor. Under his guidance was maintained in the community the same high spiritual and evangelical living into Christ, in love and in obedience. Also, under his guidance, there experienced a special development the schools for calligraphers, for copyists, and for churchly music, and they made of Putna Monastery one of the most famous monastic dwellings for praising God and for theological culture from Moldavia, together with Neamţ, Bistria, and Moldoviţa Monasteries. Here were being copied and adorned numerous service books and of patristic teaching, as there were *The Book of the Fourd Gospels* copied by Hieromonk Nicodemus (1473), *The Book of the Fourd Gospels* copied by monk Paladius (1489), The *Menaion* copied "by the hand of sinner Cassian" the Monk (1467), *The Ladder* of Saint John Climacus copied by Monk Basil (1471-1472), *The Sermons* of Saint John Chrysostom copied by Monk Chriac (1470), and many other which, sadly, have been lost or estranged.

Here sang and composed the great chief-singer Eustatius the Monk, those beautiful manuscripts of music for psalms, under the guidance of Abbot Paisius. In the school of copyists that had been functioning here, there were written, at the order of Stephen the Great, *The Chronicles* and *The Annals* from Putna. In the same school there were studying, from the monastery's teachers, the candidates to priesthood from all the villages of Northern Moldavia, learning, in addition to the theological knowledge also the churchly singing, and the high spiritual education necessary to some good souls' shepherds.

[149] Prof. Dimitrie Dan, *Putna Monastery and Putna Commune*, Bucharest, 1905; *The Archive and the Remembrance List of the Founders of Putna Monastery*; M. Costăchescu, *cited work*; Prof. Victor Brătulescu, *cite article*, pp. 460-510; Prof. Petru Rezuș, *The Schools from Putna Monastery*, pp. 511-582.

This intense spiritual and cultural work from Putna took place under the permanent guidance and supervision of Pious Abbot Paisius, helped by the confessors, by the teachers, and by all the monks from his congregation. Under his leadership Putna Monastery lived the most luminous and the most fruitful epoque from the whole its history. At that time there were at Putna, besides teachers of theology, calligraphers, and psalm-singers, also renown confessors who were teaching the right-faith and the fear of God to the people. To the confessors from Putna Monastery came to confess the bishops, the priests, and the believers form villages, as also the members of the government and himself the great Voivode Stephen "the Kind and the Holy". Without any doubt, Abbot and archimandrite Paisius was for a long time, confessor and secret adviser to Stephen the Great, along with Pious Daniel the Hermit from Voroneț. In addition to those, the religious services from Putna gathering congregations of tens of priests and with unmatched psalms-singers, attended by the lord of the country and by his advisers, made of this monastery a small Byzantium in Northern Moldavia.

Pious Paisius the Abbot proved himself top be also a worthy renewer of the foundation of Stephen the Great. After the monastery had burnt in a fire, in the year 1484, Archimandrite Paisius, helped by himself the lord of Moldavia, they renew the roof of the church and they built new monastic cells and they added other improvements too, so that Paisius became a true founder of this holy place.

After a tireless sacrifice and spiritual ascesis for more than 26 years, Pious Paisius the Archimandrite and Abbot of Putna Monastery yielded his soul in the hand of God, on 15th of February 1502, living behind a numerous community of monks with a monastic organization among the most flourishing ones.

PIOUS SPIRIDON THE MONK
Putna Monastery
(Centuries XV-XVI)

Monk Spiridon was one of the skilled calligraphers from the school of Putna Monastery. His teacher was himself Archimandrite Paisius the Abbot, a famous calligrapher and miniaturist. From him Spiridon learnt the spiritual ascesis, in humbleness and in watchfulness and in being pleasant to Christ, and also the craftsmanship of copying books. And Pious Spiridon was very zealous to the souly things, to prayer, and to fasting, to silence, and top obedience, and regarding his calligraphies he was unmatched.

Hearing about Spiridon, the old and blessed founder Stephen the Great ordered Pious Spiridon to, in the last year of his reigning – 1504 – to copy a *Book of the Four Gospels* for Putna Monastery. But as Stephen had dies in a few months, the copy was finished in the year 1506 and it was locked in silver by Stephen's son and given to Putna Monastery in the year 1507. At the end of

the Gospel according to John, Pious Spiridon wrote this beautiful note: "By the benevolence of the Father and with the help of the Son and with the consummation of the Holy Ghost, the rightly-worshipping and loving of Christ Voivode Stephen the Great, by the mercy of God Voivode of the Country of Moldavia, who was lit up by the godlike longing and for he greatly loved the words of Christ, he joyfully started this *Book of the Four Gospels* for his Putna Monastery, which is under the patronage of the Dormition of the All-Holy Borth Giver of God, but he dies meanwhile without finishing it. So, his son Voivode Bogdan, Voivode of Country of Moldavia by the mercy of God, he locked the book in silver and finished it for the soul into holiness of his deceased father Voivode Stephen, and for his health and salvation (1507, 5tyh of May)".

This humble and ascetic calligrapher was teacher in the school of Putna Monastery, educating several disciples and copying other books too, which have been estranged as the years have been passing. So, by living in a deep ascesis and finishing his trip of this life, Pious Spiridon moved peacefully to the eternal life, in the first decades of the Century XVI.

PIOUS PALADIUS THE CALLIGRAPHER
Putna Monastery
(Centuries XV-XVI)

This monk who loved Christ, he was a great calligrapher educated in the school of Putna Monastery[150]. After he had learnt well the spiritual ascesis, Archimandrite Iosaphat the Abbot of Putna appointed him to learn the craftsmanship of the calligraphy and of adorning churchly books from the famous teachers brought from Neam Monastery: Hieromonk Nicodemus, Monk Cassian, Monk Chiriac, and others. Thus, in a short time, the humble Monk Palasdius became a famous copying and painter. And he was very wise in everything, pious, and loving of God. He knew well the teachings of the Holy Fathers and he was a good adviser in the community and loved by everybody. And because he was writing rapidly and beautifully, he was nicknamed as "tachygrapher", from "quick" and "writer".

Knowing him well, Stephen the Great, the founder of the Putna Monastery, and hearing about his ascesis, Stephen ordered him in the year 1488 to write for Putna Monastery a *Book of the Four Gospels.* And Pious Paladius finished copying it in a short time and he adorned the manuscript with miniatures and icons, towards the glory of Christ and towards the joy of the great voivode. At the end of the book Monk Palasdius wrote this note: "The rightly-worshipper Lord Io Stephen Voivode, Lord of the whole Country of Moldavia, he has made, he has written and he has locked in silver this *Book of the Four Gospels* of his Monastery from Putna, in the 32nd year of his reigning,

[150] *The Archive of Putna Monastery* and *The Remembrance List of the Founders of Putna Monastery*; Fr. Dimitrie Dan, *cited work*, pp. 69-81.

being Archimandrite Paisius the Short, by the hand of the much sinner tachygrapher Paladius, in the year 1488. And it was started on 3rd of September, and it has been finished on 23rd of March"[151].

Copying other books too, which belonged to the godlike Fathers and contained Philokalian teaching, and finishing well his trip in this life, Pious Paladius moved peacefully to the heavenly dwelling places, towards the end of the Century XVI.

Pious Eustatius the Chier-Singer
Putna Monastery
(Centuries XV-XVI)[152]

Pious Monk Eustatius was the greatest chief-singer of the century XVI, known in the monasteries from Moldavia. It is believed that he had become monk at Neamț Monastery. Then, he came to Putna together with Archimandrite Iosaphat, and he sang at the consecration service of the church, on 3rd of September 1470, in the presence of the great founder, of a congregation of 64 priests, and of tens of thousands of believers.

Blessed Eustatius lived in a deep ascesis, in fasting, in prayer, and in untold joy of the Holy Ghost. Out of this spiritual joy of his heart sprang those pious songs of praise to God, which comforted the monks' hearts and which adorned the religious services officiated in the church of Putna Monastery for a half of a century. This famous chief-singer was also highly educated. He knew Greek and Slavonic, and he knew the songs composed by the great Byzantine saints and chief-singers, as: John Damascene, Roman the Melode, John Cucuzel, and many others. He not only beautifully performed the churchly songs on psalms music, but he also composed personal works on some verses, praised, and glory hymns. He was also a skilled calligrapher, copying several books of vocal churchly music, which he adorned with beautiful miniatures.

Of all those books had been preserved to these days, in the Library of Putna Monastery, only one Heirmologion, copied by his hands, at the end of the Century XV. Some of the songs which are his personal compositions, are entitled "Making of Eustatius". The other books copied by him ended in the possession od his disciples and were lost in time.

Chief-Singer Eustatius was one of the first teachers of "grammar school" from Putna Monastery, founded after the year 1470 at the order of Stephen the Great. He was teaching the monks the grammar of the psalms-music and the songs on eight voices, being called by his disciples as "orator, domesticus, teacher, and chief-singer". His name had become known in all monasteries

[151] Fr. Dimitrie Dan, *cited work*, pp. 70-71.

[152] *The Archive of Putna Monastery* and *The Remembrance List of the Founders of Putna Monastery*; Prof. V. Brătulescu, *cited work*, MM. pp. 460-510; Prof. Petru Rezuș, "The Schools from Putna Monastery", in M.M., 1964, no. 7-8, pp. 511-622.

from Moldavia and at the court of the great voivode, who cherished him and who often visited Putna Monastery for listening to his singing praising God. He was known also in the monasteries from Athos and he was reckoned among the most famous chief-singers of the Patriarchy from Constantinople, under the name "Eustatius from Putna".

For 40 years as he had lived in ascesis at Putna Monastery, Pious Eustatius raised spiritually around one hundred disciples, monks and village priests, among whom many of them reached to be famous chief-singers in the Moldavia's monasteries, at the Bishopric from Rădăuți and at the Metropolitanate of Suceava. This all-pious father was found worthy of singing, together with his disciples, at the burial service of the great founder, Voivode Stephen of Moldavia, on 2nd of July 1504.

So, after he lived a little longer being well-pleasant to our Savior Jesus Christ, he moved to the eternal life for singing ceaselessly, together with the angels, the glories of God.

PIOUS PALADIUS THE HERMIT
Putna Monastery
(Centuries XV-XVI)[153]

Schemamonk Paladius was in his youth a disciple of Saint Daniil the Hermit. Before the year 1460, when Pious Daniil had been living as hermit in the cave nearby Putna Monastery, he had around him a few disciples whom he taught the harsh ascesis as hermit and the love for God. One of those disciples was Schemamonk Paladius too.

Later on, Pious Daniil moved to Voroneț and he took this disciple together with him. Then, when Putna Monastery was founded, Schemamonk Paladius made for himself a shack dug in soil and covered with wood logs, on the Putna River's Valley, where he lives in fasting and prayer, extolling Christ day and night, and together with him lived there in ascesis also other hermits from Putna Monastery. After the prayer hours, Pious Paladius occupied himself with the copying of the churchly books. It was so how he earnt both his food and his clothing, as also the joy of confessing Christ. He was a good calligrapher and a famous hermit in that area, known to and honored by Voivode Stephen the Great. Of all the books copied by him has been preserved at Putna Monastery a sole *Book of Hours*, copied by him in the year 1493, maybe at the order of the great founder. On the page no. 181 it is written: "This book has been made by Paladius the Hermit from Putna".

So, being pleasant to God and spiritually raising several disciples, Pious Paladius the Hermit from Putna was moved to the heavenly dwelling places in the first decades of the Century XVI.

[153] *The Archive of Putna Monastery* and *The Remembrance List of the Founders of Putna Monastery*.

PIOUS CHIRIAC THE HERMIT
Neamţ Monastery
(Centuries XV-XVI)

In the ancestral forests from around Neamţ Monastery there had lived in ascesis holy hermits even before the monastery was founded (Century XIV). One of the most famous hermits from Neamţ Monastery, whose name reached up to these days, he was Pious Chiriac Hieroschemamonk, contemporary to Saint Daniil the Hermit.

This humble ascetic lived, firstly, in the community of the Neamţ Monastery, as confessor and as teacher of the Prayer to Jesus, being him loved and searched for by many. Then, he withdrew himself in quietude on the western mountain, a mount that since then has been bearing his name, and there he built a shack for himself dug in the ground and covered in wood logs, and he was living there in ascesis on his own, in fasting, in prayer, in cold, in tiredness, enduring many temptations form the devil. Later on, he brought a few disciples around himself, and they built there a wooden church and they were officiating there the religious services, they were imparting themselves, and they together extolled Christ there. That hermitage was called The Hermitage of Chiriac, and the mountain which the pious lived in ascesis on it has been called, up to these days, as The Mount of Chiriac, or, popularly: Chriacu.

So lived Chiriac in ascesis, on that mountain, for more than 30 years, ad he reached to be miracles-worker and knower of the future. At his old age, there were gathered a few monks around him. They lived monastic cells dug in the soil and covered with wooden logs, spread all over that mountain. Only on holidays, at a ring of a bell, the fathers gathered to the monastic cell of the old man and they together sang the Matins and the Holy Liturgy.

At the beginning of the Century XVI, Pious Chiriac yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord and he was buried on that mountain. His disciples lived in ascesis uninterruptedly, in that hermitage, according to the same rules, until the Pocrov Hermitage was founded (1714).

PIOUS EUPHROSYNE[154] THE HERMIT
The Older Agapia Hermitage
(Centuries XV-XVI)

A little higher than the Glade of Agapius, there is another glade, equally peaceful, surrounded by ancestral forests and crossed by a little creek. That glade is called today as Euphrosyne's Glade. There lives in ascesis, for many

[154] Though primarily Euphrosyne is a feminine name, there were cases when males bore this name. In the present case is about a monk and not about a nun. (Englis Language translator's note – in continuation E. l. t.'s n.).

years, a famous hermit called Euphrosyne, and who was a disciple of Pious Agapius. His living was equally harsh as that of his teacher, and his name had become known to many monks who loved the quietude, and who later on became his disciples.

During the time of this pious the first church and the monastic cells of the Older Agapia Monastery were destroyed by a landslide, so that Hermit Euphrosyne together with his disciples built another wooden church and they placed it under the patronage of: The Miracle from Colossae of Archangel Michael". That hermitage was also known as The Hermitage of Euphrosyne, or The Monastery of Saint Michael. The first abbot of the new hermitage was himself the Hermit Euphrosyne, who was totally keeping the rule inherited from Pious Agapius. Over the week, and especially during the fasting periods, the monks withdrew on the mountain where they were living in ascesis, in fasting, and in prayer. And on holidays all of them were coming to the church and praised God and they received the Holy Mysteries.

During the period when Euphrosyne was abbot, the Hermitage called as "of Agapius" developed even more, and it reached to be known even by the metropolitanate and by the Voivode of Moldavia, especially due to the holiness of the live from there. That was for in his community there was no vain word, nor disturbance, neither care for the earthly things, but there was permanent prayer, silence, guarding of thoughts, spiritual peace, joy, and consummate love. Everybody was practicing the Prayer to Jesus and they made a living out of their manual labor.

Feeling his death close, Pious Euphrosyne kissed goodbye his disciples and he went to resting in peace in the heavenly dwelling places, at the end of the Century XVI. And his bearer-of-good-fragrance body was buried in the orchard planted by himself and by his community, called as The Orchard of the Fathers. In that place were buried for centuries countless hermit who loved Christ, from Agapia and form the surrounding area[155].

"The hermits' life is happy, for they wing themselves with the godlike longing"!

THE HERMIT FROM THE CHAIRS' MOUNTAIN
The Older Agapia hermitage
(Centuries XV-XVI)

Among the disciples of Pious Agapius and Pious Euphrosyne, there were some of them so zealous in their hermit-like ascesis, so that they wanted to follow to the great ascetics from Egypt's wilderness. They were living as hermits on an area called up to these days the Chairs' Mountain, situated on the forested peak, one kilometer higher than the place where the Older Agapia Monastery was.

[155] *The History of Agapia Monastery*, pp. 16-19; *The Founders' Remembrance List of Agapia Monastery*.

The ascesis of the hermits living on the Chairs' Mountain was this: for the entire day they were doing manual labor and they were uttering, in the same time, the Prayer for Jesus, in total peace and silence. At the sunset, they were eating very few pieces of dry bread, and some vegetables. At night they sat on some sort of wooden benches fixed on fir tree trunks, and they were weaving wicker baskets. After midnight the fell asleep on those chairs, and in the morning, they woke up and praised God, and they started again the program of their ascesis. Form the chairs used by those hermits that place was called the Chairs' Mountain, or At Chairs. That was of living in ascesis continued until the end of the century XVIII and it was unique in the Romanian hesychasm.

On holidays eves, the hermits were descending to the church of the hermitage from the glade, where they were taking vigil for the whole night, they were listening to the Holy Liturgy, and they were imparted, and later on they were withdrawing themselves again into the forest. Those hermits were usually crafting wicker baskets, wooden rosaries, crosses, and other monastic handworks, which they were sending to be sold to Tîrgu Neamţ. In exchange for the money they obtained, the disciples were buying bread, vegetables, cloth for vestments, and other things strictly necessary to their living.

The ascesis of those pious hermits was the total silence, the peace, the taking of vigil for the entire night, the body's tiring, and the ceaseless prayer. This was for the hermits from the Agapia Hermitage, and especially those living on the Chairs' Mountain, they were great workers of the Pryer to Jesus and they were the most famous ascetics from the Neamţ Mountains. About those pious hermits the local tradition tells us that, around the beginning of the Century XVI, they were met by some boyars from the country's government who were at a hunting party. So, by seeing the harshness of the ascetics' life, the boyars told to the ascetics:

- Fathers, we don't have time to pray to God, because we are entangled in the worries of this world. Pray, your holiness, for us, and stop toiling with so much with the manual labor, and we will always send to you what you need for a living.

Hearing the Voivode Petru Rareş of Moldavia about those pious hermits, himself deigned, during his first reigning (1527-1538), to build a new church placed under the patronage of the Transfiguration, in the stead of the old one that was destroyed because of the landslide. Thus, gradually, the hermits descended from the mountain and settled themselves down in the Older Agapia Hermitage, forming there a community of monks that was famous all over Moldavia[156].

[156] Fr. N. Dărîngă, *cited work*, pp. 16-19ș Hieromonk Ioanichie Bălan, *Portraits of Spiritually Advanced Monks from the Monasteries from Neamț Country*, manuscript, p. 46.

SAINT HIERARCH NEPHON
Metropolitan of The Romanian Country († 1508)
(11th of August)[157]

a. His life

This blessed and all-wise hierarch of the Church of Christ was born somewhen between the years 1435-1440 in Peloponnese – Greece, to rightly-worshipping parents. After he had finished his studies, he became a monk and withdrew himself to quietude on Mountain Athos, where he lived in ascesis in the monasteries Cutlumus, The Great Lavra, and Dionysiou. In the year 1483 he was elected as Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, for the holiness of his life, as the most skilled Athonite monk and a devoted shepherd of souls at that time. Here he shepherded well the speaking flock, for three years, teaching everybody the fear of God and the right-faith. In the year 1486 he was appointed Patriarch of Constantinople, the highest hierarchical position in the Orthodox Church. After he had directed on the good path many Christians, monks, priest, and members of the government, and after he had removed some heresies from the Church of Christ, two year later he was removed from the patriarchal throne, and he lived in ascesis, in fasting and in prayer, at a hermitage founded by himself.

Around the year 1500, Saint Hierarch Nephon was brought and appointed Metropolitan of The Romanian Country by Voivode Radu the Great. For five years Saint Hierarch Nephon strived to guide the people according to the teaching of the Holy Gospels, advising, urging, rebuking, and spiritual building everybody, from the voivode to the last believer. Then he decided in a synod the foundation of two new bishoprics, in the Cities of Rîmnicu Vâlcea and Buzău, and he appointed upon them good shepherds who feared God and who took a good care of the flock.

In the year 1505, occurring there a grave disagreement between the great hierarch and the voivode, because of an illegitimate marriage, Saint Nephon withdrew from the throne and went again to Mount Athos, to the Vatopedi Monastery. Feeling his end near, he went together with his disciple to Dionysiou Monastery, under the anonymity, and, after a short while, he moved to the Lord, on 11th of August 1508.

Between the years 1515-1517, the holy relics of Saint Nephon were brought in The Romanian Country and they were kept at Dealu Monastery, and on 16th of August 1517, Saint Hierarch Nephon was canonized at Curtea de Argeş Monastery, by Theoleptos Patriarch of Constantinople, together with the entire synod of The Romanian Country and with all the abbot from Athos Mountain, who were partakers to the consecration of the beautiful Curtea de Argeş Monastery.

In the same year, 1517, the holy relics of Saint Nephon were restituted to Dionysiou Monastery, which was integrally restored by the Voivodes Vasile

[157] *The Lives of the Saints* on August the 11th; *Romanian Saints*, cited work, p. 338.

Lupu, Negoe Basarab, and Petru Rareș. As sign of gratitude, the Athonite monks bestowed to the Voivode Neagoe Basarab the head and the right hand of Saint Nephon, and he placed them in the monastery he founded.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Being highly educated and adorned with the gifts of the speech and of the humbleness, during his first period at Mount Athos the brothers and the monks from there welcomed him with much love, and Archimandrite Daniel, the governor of the mountain told him:

- Oh, father Nephon, I have found out from many people about you and I prayer to God to make me worthy of seeing you before my death. Lo, the all-kind God has heard my prayer. So, we pray you to teach the brothers form here the useful things.

- All-pious fathers, he answered, I am unworthy of giving medicines to the healthy ones or to the skilled doctors, but I am the one needing to be healed by them.

- Fathe Nephon, the Athonite monks answered him, it isn't appropriate to keep the godlike words only for yourself, but please share them to others too, so that all of us to benefit of those.

Asking for forgiveness, Nephon bowed his head down and started saying savior words which everyone wondered about. For he was so sweet and wise in his speech, that all of them who were listening to him couldn't leave him and they even forget about their bodily food.

2. In the year 1483, the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki dies, and all the bishops, the clergy, and the monks elected as shepherd the Blessed Nephon from Dionysiou. So, they sent two bishops with letters, to the Dionysiou Monastery to bring Saint Nephon back with them. But he told them:

- Who am I, the lazy and the sinner, to receive on the back of my neck that is totally wounded already, such a heavy yoke? I have come to this place to appease myself and to die. So, how could I run away from the path to salvation and to take upon myself the care for so many souls, when I barely can save my own sinner soul?

- Father, the Thessalonians answered him, do not oppose the godlike decision, for all the congregation, in one voice, they ask for *You* to be their shepherd.

The abbot of the monastery too, told him:

- Go, honored father, for such is the will of God you to multiply the talent, and many to be saved through you, for the Lord commanded me last night I not to impede your way!

Finally, by obeying the commandment, Pious Nephon answered:

- Fathers and my brothers, be the will of God done, as you have decided, but I will be in a great danger, form all quarters. That's why, pray to the Lord for me!

3. After three years of shepherding as Metropolitan of Thessaloniki and other four years as Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Saint Hierarch

Nephon was called by Radu the Great, the ruler of The Romanian Country, to shepherd the Curtea de Argeş Metropolitanate. The voivode told him:

- I pray your sanctity to come to Muntenia, to teach us for we are totally lacking the spiritual teaching and the pastors and the teachers. There you will be rested and all of us will welcome you joyfully. Since today we will have you as our adviser and shepherd, so that you to teach us the path to salvation and everything you command will be done!

Saint Nephon answered:

- Son Radu, I praise your good thought; but may God help you to keep it until the end. Everything I will do for your correction you will have to receive it with thankfulness. Even if yourself commit something wrong, you will have to accept my spiritual advise, because otherwise, when the lord of the country transgresses the law and defames the holy canons, then a great fall will be done to everybody, because the people easily lean towards the evil thing.

And he added at the end:

- You, who have the mastery in your hands, you owe to advise all your subjects and to punish the disordered ones. Do not look at the face either to the nobles or to the peasants, and make a right judgment, that is from God.

4. Shepherding the Church of Christ and the rightly-worshipping people of The Romanian Country for five years, in the year 1505 Saint Hierarch Nephon left again for his beloved quietude and humbleness form Mount Athos, because of the lawlessness committed by the voivode who married his sister to a Moldavian boyar who left his wife and children. Before e=leaving, he told to the voivode, with sadness:

- You know, all my power it is the law of the Church, for which our Lord Jesus Christ shed His holy blood, in order to clean it up of all sins and to sanctify it. The Church will be clean and holly through the working of the godlike commandments which I want to keep until the end of my life. I don't want for my needs either money or vestments, either some honor from you. I have been appointed by the Lord to rebuke the lawless ones and I don't want to be partaker to your lawlessness, for I am not allowed to do so by any law. I am going to leave wherever the Lord will guide me, but you will die in lawlessness. Many and countless troubles and evil pains will come upon you. Then you will search for me, but I won't be alive anymore!

And to his spiritual son Neagoe Basarab, whom he loved very much, he told:

- I am seeing, my son, that a great punishment will come upon this place and you and the whole your family will be in danger. But the all-merciful God will protect you against any evil, if you keep the commandments I've given to you. You not only will be protected against any danger, but you will be elevated to a great honor and your name till be famous everywhere. But remember me, your spiritual father. And I, if I have daring towards the loving-of-people God, I will pray Him for you.

Then he blessed him and kissed him. He did the same to all the clergy and the living-of-God people present there. For he gathered them in the

church, he gave them a last teaching-word, and he took his disciples Makarios and Iosaphat and left for the Holy Mountain.

5. Being appointed to guard the Dionysiou Monastery, Saint Nephon went together with an old and spiritual monk, called Petronius, outside the monastery's walls, At the midnight the old monk woke up to pray, and not far from him he saw Saint Nephon in prayer, with his hands raised, engulfed in a divine light that was raising all the way up and that was shining around him. The Old Petronius full of fear fell to the ground, and the next morning he went secretly inside the monastery and told the abbot about what happened. The abbot answered him:

- Father Petronius, this proved the consummate cleanness of that man and it shows us that through him many will be enlightened. Avoid telling this miracle to anyone, or he will find out that we know about him and he will leave us, running away from praise, and so we will lose such a man bestowed us by God.

6. Being at Vatopedi Monastery Saint Nephon knew in his spirit that his disciple Makarios wanted to confess Christ and to take the crown of the martyrdom. That's why, by knowing that is according to God's will, he told to his disciple:

- Go, son, on the way of confessing, for according to your desire you will be found worthy of receiving the crown of the martyrdom, and you will rejoice together with the martyrs and the pious ones.

Then, accompanying him for a part of the road, he blessed him with the Holy Cross and he kissed him. Makarios reached Thessaloniki and he daringly confessed Christ in front of the Turks who occupied the city and all the Balkan countries, so that he had been imprisoned and beaten, and after that he was beheaded. Knowing in his spirit the day when his disciple yielded his life for Christ, Saint Nephon told to his disciple Iosaphat:

- You have to know son, that today your brother Makarios died by martyrdom and he is going to go and rejoice in heavens!

7. After a little while, Saint Nephon the Patriarch took his disciple and left secretly from Vatopedi Monastery to Dionysiou Monastery, which was his monastery form youth, but he did that anonymously. According to the custom of that monastery, each monk recently arrived in the monastery must work in the beginning with the mules bringing wood form the forest. Saint Nephon fulfilled that task with humbleness and skillfulness until God unveiled him to the community miraculously.

At night, the abbot of that monastery had a dream and he saw Saint John the Baptist, the patron of Dionysiou Monastery commanding him:

- Gather together all the brotherhood and go out and welcome Patriarch Nephon, for it is enough to him so much humbleness that he has been showing as simple monk, in order you not to suffer more!

After waking up, the abbot beat the semantron, and he announced everybody that the monk serving as mules driver is Saint Nephon the Patriarch of Constantinople. Then, when the patriarch was coming back from the forest,

like a simple servant, driving the mules loaded with firewood, when he was in front of the monastery's gates the bells started ringing on their own, and all the fathers welcomed him with great honor, with torches and with incensing.

After all the fathers bowed down in prostration in front of him and they kissed his holy hands, the abbot told him:

- Oh, you the enlightener of the world, it is enough so much patience from you; it is enough the consummate suffering which you have willingly enduring it; it is enough so much humbleness shown by you, because we, the clumsy ones, haven't know who you are!

And Saint Nephon, with many tears, he told them:

- Father and brothers of mine, that's why God has hidden me in this savior-or-soul place, for I have asked from Him to deliver myself of the worries for the world and I to find mercy on the big day of the judgment. For if we do not leave our parent, our brothers, our relatives, and all the pride of this world, as Christ commanded to us, we are not worthy of following Him.

9. On one occasion, the monastery's ship came with food, and the sea was engulfed by storm, but Saint Nephon entered that ship and the storm ceased immediately. On other occasion, the brothers had asked him to pray for them in order they to travel without dangers on the sea and to bring back the things the monastery needed. And he told them:

- If you are not lazy to your rule and prayer and if you do not talk vanities and indecent words, then the Lord will help you and He will protect you against the evil happening.

Then, praying in his knees on an iron plate from that ship, he told to the monks:

- Brothers, set this iron in a clean place and when in danger of drowning, hang this iron plate in the sea and you will travel without being endangered.

10. Patriarch Nephon reached 90 years old and he felt his end close, so that he gathered together the whole community, he asked them to forgive him, and he commanded them to keep very carefully the rules of the monastic life, living with the whole zeal for earning the heavenly kingdom. Then he told them:

- My brothers, ask my humbleness for any spiritual unveiling you want, before I yield by spirit in the hand of the Lord!

- We want you to write down your godlike prayers, so that they would be read at the tomb of any brother after their death, in order they to be give the expiation of their sins. Then he left them a prayer for the absolution of the dead. Then he sent his disciple Josphat to Constantinople, to confess Christ in order to take the crown of the martyrdom, Saint Hierarch Nephon yielded his soul in the hands of God, on 11th of August 1508, being mourned by all the monks form Mount Athos. And after all the monks from Dionysiou Monastery took vigil for the whole night, on the next day all of them kissed his holy relics and they buried him with great honor and mourning in the monastery's cemetery.

In the year 1512, according to his prophecy, Neagoe Basarab, his disciple reached to be Voivode of The Romanian Country. In the year 1515 the holy

relics of Saint Nephon were brought in Muntenia, to Dealu Monastery, where they were kept for three years placed in a silver coffin donated by the voivode himself. In the year 1517, on 16th of August, Saint Nephon was canonized as Saint at Curtea de Argeş Monastery, by the Ecumenical Patriarch Theoleptos, together with the whole synod. That was the first canonization of saints known in our country.

Then his holy relics were sent, with honor, to Dionysiou Monastery, where they have been until these days.

As sign of gratitude, the community of Dionysiou Monastery bestowed to Voivode Neagoe Basarab the skull and the right hand of Saint Hierarch Nephon, which had been preserved at Curtea de Argeş Monastery, and since the year 1949 they have been preserved in the Cathedral of Craiova Metropolitanate.

Saint Hierarch Nephon, pray to God for us!

PIOUS JOHN FROM PRISLOP
(Centuries XV-XVI)[158]

Among the Romanian saints who haven't been canonized by Church yet, but who are honored as saints by believers, it is also Pious John from Prislop Monastery – Hunedoara. This monastery is placed on a peaceful mountainous area near to Haţeg County, and it was in the beginning a small hermitage for prayer for the loving-of-Christ monks.

At the beginning of the Century XV, Saint Nicodemus from Tismana founded there a monastery with community life, called Silvaşul Monastery, according to the name of the village from nearby. There lived in ascesis, along the Centuries XV-XVIII many monks with holy live from Transylvania and from over the Carpathian Mountains.

One of the great hermits from Prislop, who has remained din the awe of the believers from Haţeg Country and from our entire country is also Pious John from Prislop, honored by the local tradition as Saint John from Silvaş. His memory is preserved both in the oral tradition related to Prislop Monastery, and in an anonymous chronicle in verses, composed by the local people, entitled *The Crying of the Holy Silvaş Monastery*, written somewhen around the Centuries XVII-XVIII.

According to those oral and written sources, Pious John was a local man originating from the Upper Silvaş Village, a son of believer parents. Renouncing to marriage due to his love for Christ, Blessed John entered the community of the Prislop (Silvaşul) Monastery somewhen towards the end of the Century XV or the beginning of the next Century. Living there for many years in harsh ascesis as: prolonged fasting, ceaseless prayers, tears, vigils, and obedience, and progressing much into holiness. Pious John withdrew himself on the

[158] Fr. I. Păcurari, *Pious John from Prislop*, p. 35.

mountain, to the consummate quietude, on the Slivuţ (Silvuţ) Creek's Valley. Here, one kilometer above the Monastery, in the rocky and steep bank of the creek, the great hermit carved by himself, with a hammer and a chisel, a small monastic cell that has been preserved until these days, and it is known locally as the *monastic cell* or *the house of the Saint*. The believers had awe towards him and they trusted much his prayers, so that they were honoring him as saint even during his life, and they were often coming to that cave to tall him their troubles and to ask him for advice.

In that cave carved with so much tiredness by his own hands, Pious John lives in ascesis fighting manly the devils' temptations. They sometimes fought him with the sleeping, on some other occasions with pains in his body and with hallucinations of all sorts; on some other occasions he was tormented by the ghost of the debauchery, on some other occasions by the ghost of the self-appreciation and of the vain-glory, but the blessed hermit, by strengthening himself with the sign of the holy cross, he was kneeling to prayer with his hands raised upwards and he didn't got up until the devils had been banished. And only God knows for how long Pious John lives in ascesis in *the house of the saint* and how many people he healed with his prayer and which were his secret toils!

The devil saw that he had been constantly defeated by the prayers of Pious John, he succeeded in killing Saint John as in the following. While Saint John was carving a window in the wall of his monastic cell, an armed man from the other bank of the valley and who was hunting in that area, he shot him, by the lenience of God, thinking that John was a beast. Thus, the great martyr hesychast and unsleepingly praying monk of our nation, he yielded his soul in the hand of our Savior Jesus Christ.

After that, his relatives took his body and placed it in the village's church. Hearing about that, a few monks from The Romanian Country asked for his body and took it on the other side of the Carpathian Mountains, to their monastery. His holy relics had probably been taken to Tismana, to Bistriţa from Olteni, to Curtea de Arge, or to Cozia, monasteries which have been forever so tied to the believers and to the monasteries from Transylvania. But his soul is counted among the group of the saints and he is praying for everybody's salvation.

Saint All-Pious Father John, pray to God for us!

METROPOLITAN GHEORGHE I
Of Moldavia and of Suceava
(1477-1508)[159]

This pious metropolitan was the most important disciple of the great hierarch Teoctist I. He shepherded the Church of Christ from Moldavia, for 30 years, continuing with the same spiritual wisdom the work of his teacher.

Metropolitan Gheorghe became monk at Neamţ Monastery, and therefore he was called later on as *the one from Neamţ*. After he had learnt the spiritual knowledge which one could plentifully learn in that monastery, he reached to be, in the first place, a skilled confessor, and after that abbot of Neamţ Monastery, skillfully guiding the monks' souls on the salvation path. His community counted, around the year 1475, more than 200 monks. In the year 1477, Abbot Gheorghe was elected, by the government of Moldavia, to replace Metropolitan Teoctist, who moved to the eternal life. His first care was that for urging and for supporting Stephen the Great to build new prayer places, towards the praise of God and towards the comforting of the people.

Thus, at the advice and with the blessing of Metropolitan Gheorghe, the great voivode built and rebuilt from the ground numerous monasteries as: Saint Elijah from Suceava (1479); Saint Elijah, Floreşti-Vaslui (1480); the monastery of nuns from Pătrăuţi-Suceava; Voroneţ (1488); Borzeşti-Bacău (1493-1494; The Holy Archangels, Scînteia- Vaslui (1494); Probota (1945); Războieni (1496); Tazlău-Neamţ (1497); the church of Neamţ Monastery (1497); the belfry of Bistriţa Monastery (1498), and Dobrovăţ-Iaşi Monastery (1503). At his advice there were also built more than 35 stone-churches at the voivodal courts as also in numerous villages form Moldavia. All these churches were consecrated by Metropolitan Gheorghe, in the presence of the voivode and of numerous believers, and he appointed everywhere monks and abbots among the most spiritually advanced.

The pious hierarch of the Church of Christ loved everybody as a true father of Moldavia, and he was loved by all the people, from voivode to the last peasant. Stephen the great had him as his spiritual father, calling him as "our prayer-man and father sir Gheorghe, Metropolitan of Suceava".

Under his leadership, the spiritual life in the monasteries from Moldavia reached its highest flourishing. The hermitages and the forests "were rustling with hermits", among whom some of them were knowing the future and working miracles, as: Pious Daniil the Hermit, Saint Basil from Moldoviţa, Epiphanius from Voroneţ, Innocentius from Probota, and numerous others. He had, also, famous confessors, workers of the Prayer to Jesus, and totally pious abbots. At his urge, in the great monasteries from Putna, Neam, Bistriţa, Probota, and Moldoviţa, there were functioning famous schools for calligraphers, painters, translators, and highly educated teachers, who were

[159] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1957, pp. 234-238; Fr. N. M. Popescu, "Gheorghe-David, the Metropolitan of Moldavia", in *B.O.R. Review*, 1936, p. 56; *The Chronicle of Grigore Ureche*.

raising disciples and who were defending the Orthodox faith. In the same schools were prepared parishioners-priests for cities and villages.

Great Metropolitan Gheorghe, the chief-praying to God, from Moldavia, he was himself a living example of holiness, of piousness, of humbleness, and of love for everybody. He took good care of orphans and of war-widows, who were so numerous at that time. He took also a special care for the tens of thousands of solders fallen in wars. At his command, their remnants were gathered and buried at monasteries and churches, and their names were written in the big voivodal remembrance lists. On certain days of the year, and especially on the days of celebration of the patronage, there were officiated liturgies, requiems, and community's feats all over Moldavia, for the peaceful resting of the souls of the blessed founders and heroes of the nation.

In the summer of the year 1504, when Voivode Stephen the Great of Moldavia moved to the eternal resting, the good Metropolitan Gheorghe, accompanied by hundreds of clergies, by thousands of monks, and by tens of thousands of believers, they lead the voivode to his place for eternal resting from Putna Monastery. Then, after holding a community's counsel, he placed his hands of the top of the head of Stephen's son Bogdan, anointing him lor of Moldavia (14504-1517).

So lived in ascesis the good shepherd and souly father of Moldavia, Metropolitan Gheorghe, for 30 years, until the spring of the year 1508, reaching a very old age; feeling his end close, he took upon him the great and angelic countenance of the hermit, under the name David and, blessing everybody, he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the arms of the Great Hierarch Christ.

This worthy of being praised metropolitan "from his youth was consecrated to God in Neamț Monastery", in the second half of the Century XV. There he was tonsured in monasticism by Metropolitan Teoctist I, his spiritual father, learning from the pious old fathers the mysteries of the spiritual life. There, in the most famous hearth of the Orthodoxy from Moldavia, he was highly educated learning Greek and Slavonic and the dogmas of the Orthodox faith and the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

For his pious living, the community of Neamț Monastery elected him Abbot, in the year 1483, and he shepherded the community with parental love, for 17 years. During his service as abbot the great monastery counted up to 300 monks, among whom some of them were famous confessors, others were translators, others were copyists of books, and others were humble obedient servants of the holy religious services. Around Neamț Monastery were living in ascesis, also numerous hermits loving the quietude and the prayer, whose names are written in the book of life.

METROPOLITAN TEOCTIST II
Of Moldavia and of Suceava
(1508-1528)[160]

This all-pious abbot, together with Metropolitan Gheorghe of Moldavia (1477-1508) urged Voivode Stephen the Great to build a new church honoring the Lord's Ascent. And on 14th of November 1497, after finishing the church, they consecrated it in the presence of the lord and of tens of thousands of believers, of clergies, and of monks form the whole Country of Moldavia.

In the year 1500, after the Bishop of Roman died, Pious Archimandrite Teoctist was elected as his replacer, as Metropolitan of the Lower Country, leaving behind, at Neamţ Monastery, a flourishing community. Teoctist shepherded at Roman for eight years, advising the flock of Christ with much gentleness and nourishing them with the teachings from the Holy Gospels. And in the year 1508, after Metropolitan Gheorghe died, after the community was consulted, Bishop Teoctist was elected in Metropolitan Gheorghe's place. So this pious reached metropolitan and father and "teacher of Moldavia", the adviser of the voivodes and the comforter of the people, for he was a "taught man as no other" and he was serving with great faith the Church of Christ.

For twenty years as he was Metropolitan of Moldavia, he ordained priests for villages and skilled abbots for monasteries, encouraging the spiritual life, the learning, the copying of books, the building and the painting of the holy churches. Also, in the year 1522 he finished building and he consecrated the new cathedral of the Metropolitanate of Moldavia, placing in it the holy relics of the Saint Martyr John the New. The same metropolitan anointed as voivodes of Moldavia: Voivode Ştefăniţă in the year 1517, and Voivode Petru Rareş in the year 1527, being to both of them their first adviser, father, and confessor.

Feeling his death close, Metropolitan Teoctist withdrew from his throne to the monastery where he became a monk in the first place, and he became schemamonk under the name Theodor. Then, after blessing all his spiritual sons, he dies peacefully on 15th of January 1528 and he was buried in the narthex of the church from Neamţ Monastery[161].

SAINT INNOCENTIUS FROM PROBOTA
(Centuries XV-XVI)[162]

In the old Probota Monastery situated on the Valley of Siret River, there have been living, ever since Century XIV, monks who loved Christ and who

[160] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*.

[161] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1957, p. 306ș Fr. Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Church*, Sibiu, 1972, p. 104; Idem, "Contributions to the History of the Metropolitanate of Moldavia in the century XVI", in the M. M. Review, LI (1975), no. 3-4, p. 221.

[162] Metropolitan Dositheos, *cited work*, pp. 151-152; Fr. Prof. Liviu Stan, *cited work*, o. 56; *Hearths of Hermitages….*

were adorned with very good traits. Among all of those good treats, as himself the monastery's name proved it, the highest virtue of this community had been the godlike love.

One of the great ascetics from Probota Monastery, from the end of the Century XV, and disciples of the blessed Abbot Stahie, was also the Pious Innocentius the Monk. According to the tradition, he was the son of a local peasant. He took the cross of Christ and became a skilled monk in the community life, by consummate obedience, by prayer, and by loving the brothers…

(From here, p. 175 is illegible in the source text[163])

Saint Innocentius, pray to God for us!

PIOUS PACHOMIUS THE SCHEMAMONK
The Founder of Bistriţa Monastery – Vîlcea County
(† c. 1520)

Towards the end of the Century XV, the rightly-worshipping Governor of Craiova…

(From here, p. 175 is illegible in the source text[164])

After Pious Pachomius lived in ascesis for a while, he knew his end in advance, and he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hands of God, leaving behind a beautiful monastery counting tens of monks.

PIOUS PEON THE HERMIT
Ceahlău Mountain
(Centuries XV-XVI)

This great hermit became a monk in the Hermitage of Silvester, situate north to Ceahlău Mountain. Being him filled up with the zeal for the love for Christ, he lived as a hermit, for many years on the peak of a nearby hill, and he became a famous worker of the Prayer to Jesus and a knower of the future. The place where he lived in ascesis has been called, up to these days, as the "Hill of Peon".

Then, wanting to follow to the great hermits from Egypt and from Sinai, he made for himself a shack on the peak of Ceahlău Mountain and he live as a hermit there, for more than ten years, ceaselessly extolling God, praying for the world, and manly enduring the winter's cold and the blizzards and the devil's

[163] We hope that later on, somebody having access to a complete copy, to complete the missing text. (E. l. t.'s n.)
[164] Vid supra. (E. l. t.'s n.)

temptations. He even gathered there a few disciples and he reached to be the spiritual father of all the hermits living in ascesis around Ceahlău Mountain. So, the pious saw their zeal and he place on the top of the mountain a bell and a semantron, and he established the rule for those to be rung on each midnight, for waking up the monks living around the mountain, so that they could pray.

According to the name of the Pious, the Mount Ceahlău was called, for hundreds of years, as Peon's Mountain, or popularly Peon, and the two peaks have been called up to these days as The Semantron and Panaghid. The same Pious Peon established as day of patronage for Mount Ceahlău the 6th of August, the Transfiguration of the Lord, in the likeness of Mount Athos, and they erected there also a small wooden church.

Pious Peon established that on the patronage's day, once a year, the monks, the hermits, and the believers to gather on Mount Ceahlău, in order to take vigil for the whole night, and on the next day they officiated the Holy Liturgy and they were imparted and left for their dwelling places. Thus, this great father made of Mount Ceahlău a Romanian Athos, creating in Moldavia a strong autochthonous tradition, Mount Ceahlău being the only mountain from Carpathians and from Balkans having a patronage day.

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All-Pious Father Peon, pray for God for us!

SAINT HIERARCH GELASIUS
Great Abbot of Rîmeţ Monastery – Alba
(Centuries XV-XVI)

Rîmeţ Monastery from Apuseni Mountains, it is one of the oldest Romanian Monasteries, and it was founded around the beginning of the Century XIII by the famous anchorites living in caves on the valley of the creek bearing the same name. In the following centuries, Rîmeţ Monastery had quite a numerous community of monks and devoted abbots, who were defending very strongly the Orthodox faith in the Transylvanian Romanian villages.

Pious Gelasius the Hieroschemamonk was the most famous known abbot of Rîmeţ Monastery, honored rounding villages. He originated from those places. By taking upon himself, in his youth, the yoke of Christ, he firstly lived in ascesis as hermit on the Valley of Rîmeţ Creek, learning form the most skilled anchorites the craftsmanship of the spiritual fight. Then, after cleaning

his mind of the evil thoughts and being found worthy of the gift of working miracles, he descended to the community and he reached to be a famous abbot of the Rîmeţ Monastery.

In the tradition of the place, it is said that Pious Gelasius had twelve disciples whom he was praying and fasting together with, officiating the holy service with great zeal and fear of God. For the whole week Pious Gelasius didn't eat, and he only received the All-Clean Mysteries. During the day he worked together with his disciples, and at night he took vigil and officiated the Holy Liturgy. Only on Saturdays and on Sundays he ate together with the monks in the monastery's refectory.

This pious abbot was, also, a great spiritual father of the hermits from Mount Rîmeţ and of the villagers from that mountainous area. During fasts periods he was visiting all the hermits living in ascesis in caves, and himself was living in ascesis together with them in prayer. Then he descended to the monastery where the believers were waiting for him. At Blessed Gelasius were coming also many ill people, especially those possessed by evil ghosts and with his prayers they were being healed, for Gelasius had a great gift from God.

On one occasion, being him together with his disciples and gathering hay in the monastery's glade called Hopai, and being a very hot day, all of them suffered of thirst, so that Pious Gelasius fell on his knees in prayer, and he immediately found a spring of water. This spring of cold water can be seen even today, and it is called *The Spring of Pious Gelasius*. Many villagers come and take water out of it for health and for blessing.

Some other time, when the pious was climbing towards the glade together with his donkey, for gathering the hay, he knew that his end drew near. So, after much praying, he called his disciples and commanded to them to live in consummate love, to love the church, and to run away from drunkenness and from debauchery. Then, he kissed each of them, and he yielded his soul in the arms of Christ. In the monastery's tradition it is said that as the donkey was descending the mountain carrying the body of Saint Gelasius, the bells form the surrounding villages started ringing on their own. Saint Gelasius was buried next to the church's wall, and many ill people visiting his tomb had been healed. According to a note on the fresco on the wall of the old church, Saint Gelasius was ordained bishop and he shepherded both the community of the monks from Rîmeţ Monastery and the Orthodox Archbishopric or the Romanians from Transylvania.

In the summer of the year 1924, the creek flooded the area and washed away many bones form the monastery's cemetery. On that occasion, the skull of Saint Gelasius was removed from his tomb and it stopped in the window of the old church, where it is preserved, with honor, in the holy altar, towards the comforting of the believers. His soul in heavens is counted among the group of the Pious Fathers.

Saint Hierarch Gelasius, pray to God for us!

PIOUS ANTONY THE CHIEF-SINGER
Putna Monastery
(Century XVI)

Hieromonk Antony the Chief-Singer was one of the disciples of the famous teacher and Chief-Singer Eustatius from Putna. By taking the yoke of Christ upon himself in his youth, in the community of Putna Monastery, and being educated in the grammar and of-singing-psalms school from there, in a short while he reached to be an advanced monk and a skilled singer. He knew well Greek and Slavonic, and he was skillfully copying books for souly benefit and of songs for the pew.

After Hieromonk Eustatius – his teacher - passed away, Monk Antony was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, and he reached teacher and chief-singer in his teacher's stead, at the school of singing psalms from Putna. Ane he was famous in all monasteries from the North of Moldavia, so that many monks and young men form villages were learning from him to read, to write, and to praise God. He was also a skilled priest and confessor, advising many souls towards the shore of the salvation. And on the great holidays, and on the day of the monastery's patronage, Pious Antony was adorning the church with the most beautiful songs, as at the time of the Byzantium from yore.

Between the years 1546-1547, Pious Antony the Chief-Singer from Putna wrote a book with beautiful churchly songs used a handbook by the music school from Putna. So, living thus well in ascesis and praising God, day and night, for more than 50 years, Hieromonk Antony the Chief-Singer passed away peacefully, being added to the group of the Blessed Fathers.

HIEROMONK AMPHILOCHIUS
The First Abbot of Pîngăraţi Monastery
(† 1570)

Because the Hermitage of Simeon remains without having an abbot for a long time, a hieromonk and a teacher came from Moldoviţa Monastery, called Amphilochius. This one led the Hermitage of Simeon for more than 52 years, and under his leadership the number of the monks reached the number of 40. He was to all of them enlightened and holy father and teacher.

But because the hermitage didn't have an enough spacious church, Pious Amphilochius had prayed for a long time to Saint Martyr Dimitrius to send him a merciful person to help him building a new church made of stone. Around the year 1560, as the tradition tells us, Voivode Alexandru Lăpuşneanu tarried for a while in Piatra Neamţ, and the Great Martyr Dimitrius had showed himself in the voivode's dream and commanded him to build a stone-church at

Simeon's Hermitage. So that hermitage was renewed while Amphilochius was abbot, and it was given the name Pîngăraţi Monastery.

Then, Hieromonk Amphilochius founded there a community with a highly spiritual life, and he left everything in good order, and he withdrew to Moldoviţa Monastery as hieroschemamonk under the name od Enoch, and he lived 4 more years before passing away, peacefully, on 7th of September 1570, knowing his end in advance.

Lo what Hieromonk Anastasius, the Abbot of Moldoviţa Monastery wrote about the wonderful end of Pious Amphilochius:

"… All these things have been told by Father Amphilochius, Abbot at the Holy Pîngăraţi Monastery, to me, the humble Hieromonk Anastasius from Moldoviţa Monastery, much sinner and totally unworthy, for the Old Amphilochius got a great gift before his passing away, so that he told me even the day of his death, to me the humble Anastasius, and let nobody disbelieve that, in order not to fall into temptation, for all of these are true. I have written all these things for nobody to forget, later on, after this generations will have passed away, and anyone who wants it, to aspire to the holiness of these Holy Fathers.

That's why I am praying, fathers and brothers, to the old ones, as to my fathers; to the ones from the middle, as to my brothers; and to the younger ones as to my sons. Out of al of these, as we will be found worthy by the Holy Ghost, so that we will live in ascesis into repentance and into confessing always, day and night, until our end will come. And let's have in our mind these three commandments: how could want our soul leave our body, and how could our soul want to meet Christ in heavens, and how will we answer for our sins. And again (other) three commandments: how will God try the right-faith from the soul, and the truth (on) the tongue, and the cleanness of the body; for there all the deeds will be questioned and all the thoughts will be tempted, for there is nothing unshown in front of God. But everything will be present, all our deeds will be naked before us.

And Abbot Amphilochius, who was called Enoch as hieroschemamonk, he lived for 56 years (in monasticism), but in our Moldoviţa Monastery he lived for 4 more years, where he took the angelic image. And all his years were 83… and he knew very well the end of his life. So, he was given to the earth and he left for the long road of the fathers, by taking the payment for his toils from the Right Judge, and he was buried with honor by his disciples. And, by the prayers of this holy father, may the Lord protect all the Orthodox voivodes of Moldavia, the 8 ones who were found worthy of reigning over this land, and in the whole world of the rightly-believer lords, the ones who live in the right-faith. And to all Christian Orthodox people, who are the flock of God Whop has redeemed us with His blood, form under the curse of the law, and Who has delivered us form the hand of the devil.

For that let's not be ashamed by the great name, because for Christ we are called Christians, as Saint Gregory the Theologian said. Let's always work

His holy commandments, let's live inn ascesis until our passing away, as the Holy Gospel teaches us, and He will judge us on the Doomsday. May only the mercy of God and the cover of His All-Clean Mother protect us the sinners until the end of the time, according to His non-liar promise.

This holy abbot of this place, Amphilochius, and called Enoch after receiving the great scheme, passed away to the eternal dwelling places on in the year 7079 (1570), on 7th of September, on the days of Voivode Bogdan, at seven hours in the night, as himself showed his passing away. And his remembrance has been set to be done on the day of the Birth of the Birth-Giver of the Lord, on 8th of September, in all the years as the Pîngăraţi Monastery will exist, and abbot in his stead was appointed Priest Theodor from Bistriţa Monastery[165].

SAINT EUSTATIUS FROM PROBOTA
(Century XVI)[166]

Another pious monk from the community of Probota Monastery, honored by people and canonized by Metropolitan Dositheos among the Romanian Saints, he was Pious Eustatius the Monk. He originated from the villages from Siret's Valley.

Hearing about the living of the monks from Probota's coenobitic community, and hearing especially about the ascesis of Pious Innocentius, he left everything behind and he became a disciple of Pious Innocentius. And he was a consummate follower of Innocentius's deeds, living in ascesis for many years in a hermit's cell, in the ancestral forests of the monastery. Thus, in a few years, he crossed through many monastic ascetic toils, learning the fear of God form everybody and surpassing many with his humbleness, with his prayers, and with his immortal love. For such an ascesis he was found worthy of the gift of working miracles and he was loved both by God and by people. Everybody benefited of his prayer and of the holiness of his life. Then, after applying well the word of the Gospel of Christ and reaching the measure of his teacher, Pious Eustatius moved to the heavenly dwelling places and he was counted among the group of the Holy Fathers. It is believed that Metropolitan Dositheos bowed down in worship in front of the holy relics of both saints, Innocentius and Eustatius, and himself Dositheos became a monk at Probota Monastery.

Saint All-Pious Father Eustatius, pray to God for us!

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[165] Excerpt from manuscript no. 30 (9) entitled: *Book with Many Selectiosn from Scriptures*, copied at Older Agapia Monastery in the year 1808, by Monk Methodius, according to the original biography of Abot Anastasius written in the year 1570 at Moldovița Monastery. The manuscript is preserved in the Library of Oltenia-Craiova Metropolitanate. To be seen also the *Remembrance List of the Founders of the Pîngăraţi Monastery*.

[166] Metropolitan Dositheos, *cited work*, pp. 151-152; Fr. Prof. Livius Stan, *cited work*, p. 56.

METROPOLITAN THEOPHANOUS I
Of Moldavia and of Suceava
(1534-1546)[167]

Metropolitan Theophanous I, the closest collaborator and adviser of Voivode Petru Rareş, he was spiritual father of Moldavia for 12 years. He became a monk at Voroneţ Monastery, and he was one of the disciples of Saint Daniil the Hermit. Receiving an exquisite spiritual raising and education from his teacher, and becoming a distinguished literate in the school of Voroneţ Monastery, in the year 1522 he was found worthy of being elected Bishop or Rădăuţi Eparchy. For more than 10 years, Bisop Theophanus shepherded well the flock of Christ, defending the right-faith, giving alms to the poor, and conquering all the people by his gentleness and love.

In the year 1534, after the chair of Suceava remained unoccupied, Voivode Petru Rareş, after holding a general council, he appointed him Metropolitan of the country. Thus, for other 12 years, this gentle shepherd advised the people of Moldavia on the path to salvation, being to all of them example of humbleness, of patience, and of spiritual steadfastness. As metropolitan he defended the persecuted people and he was always present to the holy services as also in the country's council where he was always listened to.

This metropolitan founded in Moldavia, as the Metropolitanate from Suceava, the most famous fresco painting school, and that school produced bright craftsmen as Dragoş Coman and Toma from Suceava. At his urge, Voivode Petru Rareş rebuilt and renewed several churches from monasteries like: Humor Monastery (1530), Moldoviţa Monastery (1523), the cathedral of the Bishopric from Roman (1542), the Saint Dumitru Church from Suceava (1535), Probota Monastery (1527), Bistriţa Monastery (1541-1546), and others. Also, he appointed abbots among the most spiritually advanced ones, and he developed the schools for copyists and calligraphers at Putna, Neamţ, Probota, and Moldoviţa. In those places of prayer and of high spiritual living were copied and translated, with the blessing of Metropolitan Theophanous I, numerous cultic books and writings of the Holy Fathers. At the same monasteries, there were functioning famous schools for psalms-singing, and for educating priest for villages.

At the order and on the expenses of this pious metropolitan, it was painted the narthex of the Voroneţ Church, as it is mentioned by the inscription from inside the church: "This porch was beautified and gilded by Theophanous, Archbishop of Moldavia, in te3h year 1540, June the 12th. His

[167] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1957; Fr. Prof. M. Păcurariu, "Contributions to the History of the Metropolitanate of Moldavia in the century XVI", in *M. M. Review*, LI (1975), no. 3-4, pp. 223-225.

eternal remembrance!"[168]. And in the year 1543, he donated to Voroneţ Monastery a "Praxios" (The Acts of the Apostles), written on parchment by Deacon Mihail.

Thus, after well guiding the flock of Christ, and after renewing many holy altars, in the summer of the year 1546, Metropolitan Theophanous I moved to the eternal life and he was buried in the church of Voroneţ Monastery, next to Saint Daniil, who was his spiritual father.

METROPOLITAN GRIGORIE ROŞEA
Of Moldavia and of Suceava
(† 1570)[169]

This loving-of Christ hierarch was one of the closest disciples of Pious Daniil the Hermit, and he was a relative of him. He originated from the North of Moldavia. Towards the end of the Century XV (1490) he was brought in the community of Voroneţ Monastery by the Pious Abbot Daniil the Hermit. About Daniil the Hermit Metropolitan Grigorie wrote, later on, on a *Gospel* bestowed to Voroneţ Monastery, that "from early childhood I have promised myself to God, by the prayers of Saint our Fathers Daniil the New".

As disciple of the greatest Moldavian confessor, hermit, and saint, the young Grigorie learnt since his childhood, from his teacher, the spiritual ascesis, the humbleness, the obedience, the whole wisdom, the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and the love for people. He learnt, also, the rule of the religious services, the prayer, and the good management of the Lord's house.

For his spiritually advanced life, in the year 1523 he was appointed abbot of Probota Monastery, which he led with much zeal and skillfulness for 23 years (1523-1546). Being a relative of Voivode Petru Rareş, at his urge, the Voivode of Moldavia renewed entirely the church and the old monastic cells, and he chose this monastery as his resting place after his death.

Under the leadership of Hieromonk Gregory Roşea, Probota Monastery experienced an epoque of great spiritual and cultural flourishing. During his time at Probota Monastery shone two great pious bearers of God fathers, namely Saints Innocentius and Eustatius. The community counted almost 100 monks, among whom there were famous confessors, skilled praying monks, painters of churches, teachers of foreign languages, translators, and good calligraphers. Also, by his care, the church of Probota Monastery was painted integrally, both inside and outside. This abbot contributed the most to forming a famous school of Moldavian painters, as never had been before in Moldavia.

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[168] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1957; Fr. Prof. M. Păcurariu, "Contributions to the History of the Metropolitanate of Moldavia in the century XVI", in *M. M. Review*, LI (1975), no. 3-4, pp. 226-231.

[169] *Ibid*.

Some of these anonymous painters were monks and disciples of the great abbot.

The Voivode of Moldavia, Iliaş Rareş (1546-1551) saw the life of Abbot Grigorie, so that in the year 1546 he elected, with community's consultation, Metropolitan of Moldavia. For 6 years as he shepherded the flock of Christ, the tireless hierarch reinvigorated the monastic life in monasteries, he appointed worthy abbots, he built churches in villages, and he advised skillfully his speaking sheep on the way to salvation, defending with the whole his power the holy Orthodox faith.

But, the fickleness of the times and the often changes of the voivodes forced the great metropolitan, in the year 1551, to withdraw from the metropolitan throne to Voroneţ Monastery, where he had become a monk in the first place. For another 19 years Metropolitan Grigorie was a torch and an unquenched candle in that community and for the whole Northern Moldavia, teaching everybody and using the word and the deed, the humbleness, the manhood, the urge, and the much wisdom. For he was a souly father to many abbots and confessors, hermits, commoners, and members of the government. During that time, the hermit-like life knew a great amplitude, especially around Voroneţ Monastery, Slatina Monastery, Agapia Monastery, and in the Rarău and Ceahlău Mountains.

The fame of this metropolitan attracted numerous monks into Voroneţ Monastery's community, among whom some were chroniclers, knowers of Greek and Slavonic, translators in Romanian, and skilled at the Holy Scripture. Metropolitan Grigorie Roeşa was reckoned as the founder of a school of copyists and translators at Voroneţ Monastery, where were studied the biblical texts and thew writings of the Holy Fathers, where were translated books in Romanian, and where they perseveringly worked on forming the national language and on introducing it in our Orthodox cult.

The monks from Voroneţ Monastery, with the blessing from Metropolitan Grigorie, they reached Maramureş and allover Transylvania, bringing manuscripts from a side to another. Due to this hierarch and to his disciples has been preserved here two among the oldest Romanian manuscripts *Voroneţian Codex* and *Voroneţian Book of Psalms*. Also at his command, it was copied for Voroneţ Monastery a *Book of Four Gospels*, in the year 1551, "on the expense of Archbishop Grigorie, Metropolitan of Suceava, by the hand of sinner deacon Mihail".

This tireless hierarch also added a new porch to the church of Voroneţ Monastery, and he asked two of the most famous painters of Moldavia to adorn it with external fresco, that sit e most beautiful from the country. At the entrance he commanded to be painted next to his portrait also the portrait of Pious Daniil the Hermit, with a saint aura. The same Metropolitan Gregory ordered to be placed a beautiful tombstone over the holy relics of his teacher and souly father. Thus, Metropolitan Grigorie Roşea is reckoned as the third

founder of Voroneţ Monastery, next to Stephen the Great and Saint Daniil the Hermit his relative.

Reaching and old age and preparing his tomb himself, on 5th of February 1570, the worthy hierarch and father of Moldavia, Grigorie Roşea moved to the eternal life aged 90 and he was buried under the porch of the church renewed by him.

BISHOP MAKARIUS OF ROMAN
(† 1558)[170]

This venerable hierarch of the Church of Christ was the most the most highly educated Bishop of Roman from century XVI. He became a monk at Neamţ Monastery, where he had lived in ascesis since his childhood, as disciple of Metropolitan Teoctist II (1510-1528).

Seeing him burning for the love for Christ and being him full of the whole wisdom, his spiritual father who was then abbot of the great monastery, he entrusted Makarios to the best teachers and confessors from Neamţ Monastery. Thus, for several years, Monk Makarius had been learning the knowledge of the Holy Scripture, and the Greek and the Slavonic. And form the pious monks he learnt the fear of God and the zeal for serving the church all the way to personal sacrifice.

Being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, Archimandrite Makarius became abbot of Neamţ Monastery in the year 1508, in the stead of his father Teoctist who was elected as Bishop of Roman. Pious Makarius advised the monastery for 23 years, being to everyone an example of obedience, gentleness, wisdom, and steadfastness. He contributed to a great development of the catechetic and grammar schools form the monastery, where tens of confessors, abbots, bishops, teachers, and pious hermits were educated. Many of those occupied themselves with the Prayer to Jesus, others were copying cultic books, as there was Monk Theodor Mărişescu, and other were translating the works of the Holy Fathers being good knowers of the patristic writings.

The news about the living and the wisdom of Pious Abbot Makarius spread all over Moldavia, and many had him as adviser and as spiritual father. Hearing about that Petru Rareş, in the spring of the year 1531 appointed him as Bishop of Roman and spiritual father of his family. Then he asked him to write the Chronicle of Moldavia between the years 1504-1541, which he wrote with much skillfulness, for there was no other hierarch more highly educated than him, at that time in the country.

Bishop Makarius lived a totally special life, in prayer, in fasting, and in giving of alms, taking a great care of the salvation of the human souls. At his bishopric he founded a school for catechizers for parishioner priests and he

[170] *The History of the Romanian Church*, vol. I. Bucharest, 1957, pp. 346-347; Fr. Prof. Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, Sibiu, 1972, pp. 107-108.

renew many churches in villages. He was parentally examining the believers, advising and comforting everybody. For such good deeds, his disciple Euthimius, Abbot of Neamţ Monastery, called him "all-clean hierarch and teacher of Moldavia", and others called him "all-taught Bishop Makarius the Chronicler".

Seeing the Bogdăneşti-Fălticeni Hermitage almost derelict, Bishop Makarius built there, from the ground, with the help of Petru Rareş, the Rîşca Monastery, between the years 1542-1550. The church placed under the patronage of Saint Hierarch Nicholas was adorned with internal and external fresco, and there were built monastic cells and a monastic school. This hierarch made of his foundation a famous hesychastic community counting more than 60 monks, all of them working the Prayer to Jesus, among whom some of them reached to be counted among the saints. The most pious disciple of Bishop Makarius was, of course, "John from Rîşca, the holy and wonderful archbishop".

The second foundation done by Bishop Makarius was the episcopal cathedral from Roman, rebuilt from the ground by the Voivode of Moldavia, at his urge, between the years 1542-1550. At his advice too, the cathedral was painted, and there was formed a beautiful episcopal library, and his disciples copied several works of the Holy Fathers.

After a spiritual ascesis for more than 60 years, of which 27 years as bright shepherd of the "Metropolitanate of the Lower Country", Pious Bishop Makarius yielded his soul in the hand of the Great Hierarch Jesus Christ, in the autumn of the year 1558, and he was buried at Rîşca Monastery. For many time his disciples continued, in Moldova and in Transylvania, his ascesis and his work.

PIOUS PAISIUS THE HIEROMONK
Abbot of Humor Monastery
(Century XVI)[171]

Hieromonk Paisius was abbot and spiritual father of Humor Monastery, during the reigning of Petru Rareş. He lived in ascesis in this monastery since his youth, toiling day and night, with the fasting, with the prayer, and with the humble obedience. He was also a skilled confessor, a teacher, and a good calligrapher. For such an ascesis, the community of Humor Monastery elected him abbot in the year 1528. Hearing about the life of Abbot Paisius, Petru Rareş, the lord of Moldavia (1527-1538; 1541-1546) appointed him adviser and spiritual father and he listened to his advice and he did many things with his blessing.

[171] Prof. I. Brătulescu, *cited article*, pp. 463-466; *The Book of the Four Gospels from Humor Monastery,* manuscript no. 576, Library of Putna Monastery; *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I. Bucharest, 1957.

Seeing the pious that his community was increasing, and the old church became too small for accommodating so many monks, he decided to build a new church under the patronage of Saint Great Martyr Gheorghe, "by the will and with the help of rightly-believer our lord Voivode Petru (Rareş)", and on the expense of logothete Tudor Bubuioc. The building of the church started in the year 1530, under the supervision of Abbot Paisius, and it ended in the same year, on the feast day of the Dormition of the Mother of the Lord. Around the church were built new monastic cells, made of stone, where were living in ascesis more than 40 pious monks. Here too, Abbot Paisius founded a monastery school for monks and for parishioner priests, with teachers of Greek and of Slavonic and with skilled calligraphers.

Pious Paisius, being himself a good calligrapher and painter of miniatures, he adorned the new church with "internal and external" fresco, by the hand of the best painter living at that time in Moldavia. Thus, in the year 1535, Painter Toma of Suceava fulfilled the desire of the Abbot Paisius and he adorned the church with a fresco of a rare spiritual and iconographical value.

In the year 1538, Petru Rareş was exiled to Ciceu and the monasteries were plundered, and Abbot Paisius hid in a forest the precious cultic objects of the monastery, and the famous *Book of the Four Gospels* donated by Stephen the great (1473) he sent it by two monks to Ciceu, in order to be for help and for comforting to the exiled voivode. After four years, taking again the throne of Moldavia, entrusted the mentioned *Book of the Four Gospels* in the hands of Abbot Paisius[172].

Thus, after much toiling and manly enduring the troubles of this life, Pious Paisius yielded his soul in the hands of God, towards the middle of the century XVI, leaving behind many disciples.

[172] Lo the note written on that *Book of the Four Gospels*:
"In the year forty-seven over six thousand, it happened that the Turkish emperor rose himself with the whole his country, with the easter sides and with the Tatar sides and with the sides from Muntenia, against this poor Country of Moldavia, during the days of Petru Voivode. And the whole country was scared, and we, the monks from Humor, because of the dread that engulfed the country, we sent this *Book of the Four Gospels* in the Hungarian Country, to the Ciceu City. And when it had happened that Voivode Peter left his reining, he found this *Book of the Four Gospels* there and he kept it with himself. After no such a long time, God and His All-Clean Mother had mercy and bestowed again the crown of the reigning so that Voivode Petru to be against lord of Moldavia and of the Christians and he came with the Turks and took the scepter, namely the flag of \Moldavia and he was welcomed in the all-glorious capital city of Suceava. And he gave again this *Book of the Four Gospels* to Humor Monastery for his soul and for the soul of his father, Stephen Voivode the Older, being Abbot at the time Paisius the Hieromonk, the one who sent the book in the first place, to Ciceu" (Excerpt from the Review M.M.S, no. 7-8 / 1966, pp. 463-466).

PIOUS PACHOMIUS THE HERMIT
The Founder of Slatina Monastery
(Century XVI)[173]

In the first half of the century XVI, there lived in ascesis on the Valley of the Small Suha Creek, Commune Slatina-Suceava, a holy miracles-worker hermit called Pachomius. He had his monastic cell in a bid, peaceful glade, situated north to the present monastery, called up to these days as the Glade of Pachomius.

Pious Pachomius, according to the local tradition, he became a monk at Voroneț Monastery, situated twenty kilometers upper than Slatina, and he was one of the most important disciples of Saint Daniil the Hermit. Then, by loving the hermit-like life, he withdrew himself in quietude in the forests from on the Suha Creek Valley. There had already existed a hermitage, ever since the reigning of Stephen the Great, but it later on disappeared.

The ascesis of Saint Pachomius was so superior that God found him worthy even of the gifts of working miracles and of knowing the future. He spent his days and nights in fasting and in prayer, with his hands and mind elevated to God. He ate only once a day or once two days, after sunset, and his heart was permanently burning for the love for Christ, for the gift of the Holy Ghost was resting within him. So, the pious defeated the traps of the enemy, the night-hallucinations, the hunger, the cold, and all the needs of the nature, and after many years he reached a great spiritual resting. Thus, being well-pleasant to God, he was healing the illnesses and he was banishing away the unclean ghosts with his prayers, being searched for by many believers from the surrounding villages.

In the year 1553, God wanted to found a monastery in that place, so God unveiled to Pious Pachomius a miracle like this: each Saturday nights and each nights towards feasts, when there are officiated religious service in the churches, the pious saw many light lit in a big sycamore, down in the glade, and above that tree he was hearing an angelic choir singing the troparion of Lord's Transfiguration. So, he prayed with tears in his eyes and the Mother of the Lord showed Herself to him and commanded him to go to Voivode Alexandru Lăpușneanu and to urge him to build in that place a monastery for monks. The lord of Moldavia listened to the urge of Pious Pachomius and built there a beautiful monastery, between the years 1553-1559, placing the altar in that place where that sycamore was. So was founded Slatina Monastery.

Thus, Pious Pachomius lived a little longer, and then he moved to the group of the saints, at the heavenly dwelling places, and his body was placed next to then recently built church. Also, the Spring of Pachomius that never dries, it has been brough to monastery towards comforting the brothers living there.

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[173] I. Neculce, *The Chronicle of Moldavia*, 1975, p. 17; the local tradition; *The Remembrance List of the Founders of the Slatina Monastery*.

PIOUS JACOB THE WORTHY
The First Abbot of Slatina Monastery
(Century XVI)[174]

This pious father, as his name show it itself, he was the first abbot of Slatina Monastery. Immediately that Voivode Alexandru Lăpuşneanu (1553-1564) started building this godlike praying place in the honor of Lord's Transfiguration, at theurge of Pious Pachomius the Hermit, he entrusted that work to Hieromonk Jacob, a worthy servant of Christ from Neamţ Monastery. Then, after reaching spiritual father of the Slatina Monastery in the year 1558, he supervised with much skillfulness the building of the voivodal foundation. On 3rd of September 1559, when the church was consecrated in the presence of the founder and of tens of thousands of believers, Pious Jacob became secret adviser and confessor of the voivode's family.

For 15 years as he led Slatina Monastery, Abbot Jacob formed there a community counting over 60 monks having a highly spiritual life. Some of them were schemamonk and skilled workers of the Prayer to Jesus. Others were famous confessors and shepherds of souls for monks and for laymen. And others were taught teachers of Greek and Slavonic, good knowers of the Holy Fathers, chronicles, and skilled calligraphers. Under the supervision of this tireless abbot, at Slatina Monastery were copied numerous Philokalian and cultic books, and there were written important pages of the Moldavia's Chronicle, and there were prepared hundreds of young men for being priests in villages. The hesychastic life too experienced a great development around the monastery, for there were living in ascesis tens of disciples of Pious Pachomius in those places, among whom there were great ascetics and workers of the Prayer to Jesus. All of them were helped by the great abbot.

Also, Abbot Jacob adorned the church with exquisite voivodal cultic objects, he built from the ground monastic cells for the monks, and he endowed the monastery with numerous donations, thus placing the foundation of Alexandru Lăpuşneanu among the most renowned voivodal foundations from Moldavia. For all those deeds, all the people called the abbot of Slatina Monastery as Jacob the Worthy, for he was full of wisdom and of fear of God and he never backed when facing the danger.

A great merit Pious Jacob had for urging the voivode of Moldavia to build other holy praying places too, both in the country and at Mount Athos. At his advice were renewed the monasteries: Bistriţa, Tazlău, Bogdana-Rădăuţi, Saint Dumitru-Suceava etc., as also other holy prayer-places from Athos, among which the most important was Dochiaru Monastery which he redone it entirely.

To all these deeds, Abbot Jacob added one more good deed. Seeing the close end of the voivode, as also the great number of his enemies, and for he

[174] The Archive and *The Remembrance List of the Founders of Slatina Monastery*; Protosyncellus Chrysostom Asavei, *The Monograph of Slatina Monastery*, manuscript, 1948, pp. 41-42; N. Iorga, *Studies and Documents Regarding the History of the Romanians*, vol. VII, Bucharest, 1904, p. 101.

wanted the salvation of the great lord, he advised him to accept entering the monasticism. Thus, in the year 1568, Pious Jacob the Worthy tonsured Alexandru Lăpuşneanu in monasticism, calling him Pachomius, according to the name of the great hermit who advised him to build that monastery. Later on, after the Monk Pachomius and his former wife Lady Ruxandra and their sons dies, they were buried by the abbot in the church erected by them.

In the year 1572, Abbot Jacob moved to the eternal life.

PIOUS ZOSIMUS THE HIEROSCHEMAMONK
The Founder of Secu Monastery
(Century XVI)[175]

This hieromonks if the founder of the first hermitage on the Secu Creek's Valley, during the second half of the century XVI. In his youth, Zosimus (Zosin) was a small state-clerk at the court of the lord of Moldavia. Then, he had heard about the living of some improved hermits on the Valley of Secu Creek, Neamţ Monastery, as: Prochor, Benjamin, Chiriac, Besarion, Stephen, Spiridon, Anastasius, and others, so that he was urged by the Holy Ghost to enter the monasticism at his turn.

So, by much benefitting of the holiness of the life of those fathers, and by seeing that they had not church nearby where they to serve Christ, he sold all his wealth and he founded on Secu Valley the first hermitage called *The Hermitage of Zosimus*, under the patronage of The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist. In this hermitage he received the angelic image of the monk, under the name Zosimus. Later on, he was ordained as priest and he reached being the first abbot of this humble hermitage.

The ascesis of Pious Zosimus and of his disciples reached to he known to Alexandru Lăpuşneanu, the Voivode of Moldavia, so that he endowed the hermitage with a few donations, some of them in land, between the years 1555-1568. Thus, being well-pleasant to God and guiding that hermitage for over 20 years, he Pious Zosimus gathered around himself a community of 30 hermits who were extolling Christ day and night. Some of the hermits were enlightened with much spiritual learning, as there was Hieroschemamonk Dositheos, and they became renown teachers and advisers of souls.

Reaching an old age, and leaving Dositheos as abbot in his stead, Pious Zosimus passed away peacefully, and he was placed near to the church built by him.

[175] *The Remembrance List of the Founders of Secu Monastery*; Confessor Andronic, *The History of Secu Monastery*, manuscript, no. 53, State Archives from Rm. Vîlcea; Nestor Severineanul, "And Unknown Manuscript of Confessor Andronic – The History of Secu Monastery, in *M.M.*, 1974, no. 3-4, pp. 180-196.

PIOUS MOSES, PROCHOR, BENJAMIN, SPIRIDON, CHIRIAC, BESARION, STEPHEN, AND ATHANASIUS
Hermits on Secu Valley
(Century XVI)[176]

A few donation documents to Secu Monastery, form the centuries XVI and form the beginning of the century XVII, there are mentioned eight hermits among the most famous, who lived in ascesis in the ancestral forests on the Secu Valley. Thus, those documents mention: "the Monastic Cells of Moses", "the Monastic Cells of Prochor", "the Monastic Cells of Benjamin", and "the Monastic cells of Spiridon and Chiriac", situated outside the walls of Secu Monastery.

These pious hermits became monks at the Neamț Monastery. So, wanting the blessed quietude and being urged by the gift of trh Holy Ghost, they became famous hermits on Secu Valley, before the foundation of the Hermitage of Zosimus (in the second half of the century XVI). They are among the first hermits known on the Sercu Valley, mentioned by the document of that time. Their ascesis was so highly spiritual that their names and their deeds reached the ears of the country's lor and not few monks came and become their disciples. The mentioned documents tall us that each of them had monastic cells, namely small communities composed of 3-4 hermits, among whom the old monks were reckoned as the superior of those monastic cells. All of them together, and together with other famous hermits, they composed the first hermitage on Secu Valley. Of course, the first inhabitants of the Hermitage of Zosimus, led by Abbot Dositheos, they too belonged to the community of those pious hermits. Then, once the building of the hermitage began (1564), a part of them entered the community under the obedience to Abbot Dositheos, and the others remained to live, further on, in their monastic cells in the forest.

Pious fathers Moses, Prochor, Benjamin, Spiridon, Chiriac, Besarion, Stephen, and Athanaius, they lived for the whole their life in ascesis, in fasting, in prayer, and in thinking at the godlike things. Only on holidays they gathered in the Hermitage of Zosimus and they listened to the religious service, and they were imparted with the Holy Mysteries, they took dry bread for food and they turned back to wilderness again.

After many years of harsh ascesis, the eight loving-of-Christ hermits passed away peacefully, towards the end of the Century XVI, leaving behind many disciples and a profound hesychastic tradition that has lasted up to these days.

[176] *Documents Regarding the History of Romania, A. Moldavia. Century XVI*, vol. III, p. 267; Bishop Nestor Severineanul, *cited work*, pp. 180-196.

PIOUS JOHN THE HERMIT
Hermitage's Valley
(Century XVI)

Hermit John is reckoned among the first monks who lived as hermits in the ancestral forests form the Hermitage's Valley. Of course, he came from the community of Neamț Monastery, as all the other hermits living on Neamț Mountains.

So, loving the consummate quietude and burning for the love for Christ, he withdrew himself on the mountain, at the spring of the Secu Creek, and there he made for himself a monastic cell in a lonely glade, that has been bearing his name until today. And his toils, his prayers, and the temptations from the devils endured by the Pious John the Hermit are known only to God. The tradition of the place tells us that Pious Hermit John lived for many years in that glade, and that he was a great confessor, teacher of the quietude and of the prayer, and he was full of the love for Christ. Thus, his name reached to be known all over the place and many loving-of-quietude monks became his disciples. It might be that just from this hermit that place was called, firstly, as *The Valley of the Hermit*, and later on as *The Valley of the Hermits*, and, finally, as *The Valley of the Hermitage*.

Reaching an old age, Pious John the Hermit yielded his soul in the hand of God and he was buried by his disciple sin that glade[177].

PIOUS SILVAN THE HIEROMONK
The First Abbot of Rîşca Monastery
(† 1579)[178]

Hieromonk Silvan became a monk at Bogdăneşti Monastery – Suceava. He was a disciple of Bishop Makarius of Roman. After that monastery was ruined and nearby was built another monastery by Voivode Bogdan the Blind (1512-1517), the pious fathers moved there. Then Hieromonk Silvan too moved to the new voivodal foundation, and he proved to be in all aspects obedient and zealous for the godlike things. He also loved the quietude and he often withdrew himself in the forests from the foot of the mountains, where there were living numerous hermits.

Between the years 1540-1542, being the whole monastery renewed by Voivode Petru Rareş and by Bishop Makarius of Roman, under the name of Rîşca Monastery, Pious Silvan was appointed abbot, for he was a famous confessor and advanced in good deeds. Until the summer of the year 1542

[177] The earliest note speaking about The Glade of John is a land-donation dating from the first half of Century XVI, one establishing the rights of the Monasteries Neamț and Older Agapia.
[178] Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu, *The History of Holy Monastery Rîşca*, Fălticeni, 1901, p. 74; *The Remembrance List of Rîşca Monastery*; N. Stoicescu, *Bibliographical Repertory. Moldavia*, Bucharest, 1974, p. 711.

Abbot Silvan took care of building the churches and the monastic cells. Then, gathering around him more than 30 monks, he founded there a highly spiritual monastic community with good confessors and with good calligraphers brought form Neamţ Monastery. The rule of the monastery was the same as in all other monasteries from Moldavia: Matins as midnight, the daily Holy Liturgy, the confession of the sins and the impartation with the Body and Blood of Christ weekly, once a day eating except the feast days, and obedience in consummate love, with the Prayer to Jesus.

Pious Silvan also encouraged the hermit-like living in the Rîşca Mountains, where, centuries before, there were living in ascesis holy hermits. He was sending the necessary means to the pious living in the wilderness and they spiritually examined them, and those who were loving of quietude were allowed by him to withdrew themselves into loneliness.

After living thus in ascesis, in the year 1548 Pious Silvan withdrew himself from the position of abbot, and he became a Schemamonk. The, after living until the year 1579, and being him well-pleasant to God, he moved to the eternal life, leaving behind numerous spiritual sons.

PIOUS JOB THE HERMIT
Rîşca Monastery
(Century XVI)[179]

Hermit Job became a monk at Rîşca Monastery. He was a teacher and an adviser of the Archbishop John the Holy (1550-1598). This pious lived in ascesis, firstly in the community, surpassing all the other monks with his obedience and zeal. Then he became a disciple of a famous hermit who was living on the Pleşu Mountain from nearby, and he too lived in ascesis, in the wilderness, for around 30n years.

There, in a short time, by the gift from Christ, he reached to be the most famous hermit from around Rîşca Monastery. Teacher of the prayer, adviser of souls, and spiritual father to many loving-of-quietude hermits, he prophesized in advance the desertion of Rîşca Monastery and the scattering of the monks from there, a fact that happened in the year 1547, because the Turks plundered in that year the villages and the monasteries from Moldavia. All the monks, together with Pious John from Rîşca, withdrew themselves on the mountain, where Pious Job was, and they lived there, in ascesis, for several years, enduring many dangers until the country became safe again. To this blessed hermit Archbishop John the Saint, from Rîşca, was coming often, for useful words and he did many things according to his advice.

Living thus in ascesis, Job the Hermit moved to the eternal resting somewhen around the end of the century XVI, being buried by his disciple sin

[179] Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu, *cited work*, p. 24; *The Remembrance List of Rîşca Monastery*, The local tradition.

the wilderness. That place had been called, until these days, as The Glade of Job, popularly Jova.

BISHOP ISAIAH OF RĂDĂUȚI
(† 1592)[180]

This loving-of-Christ hierarch was the most famous bishop of Rădăuţi from the Century XVI. He became a monk at Slatina Monastery where he learnt from his youth the harshness of the monastic life and the love for God and for people. In the same monastery's school, he was enlightened with much education so that he surpassed all his teachers. For he was skilled in the knowledge of the Holy Scripture, in the writings of the Holy Fathers, in working the Prayer to Jesus, and in guiding the human souls on the path to salvation. He knew well the history of Moldavia and of the entire Byzantium, and he was a good chronicler, calligrapher, and speaker of foreign languages. While he was hieromonk, before the year 1561, Pious Isaiah copied a Byzantine chronographer and two chronicles, one Serbian and one Bulgarian. And between the years 1561-1564 he wrote a shortened chronicle of Putna Monastery.

Hearing about his wisdom and ascesis, Voivode Alexandru Lăpuşneanu appointed him Bishop of Rădăuţi, in the year 1564, an eparchy which he shepherded on, with high skillfulness and gentleness for 14 years. As shepherd of souls, he toiled to appoint good priests in villages and to appoint spiritually advanced and taught abbot in monasteries. Also, he often visited the monks and the laypeople. He developed much the schools from the monasteries and he was encouraging the hermit-like life in the North of Moldavia. And as secret adviser of the voivode he often mediated between the voivode and his subjects, always persevering for good understanding and for reconcilement. He accomplished a few peace missions abroad, in Transylvania, in Poland, and in Russia.

In the year 1577 the good shepherd of the flock of Christ withdrew himself from the chair to the Older Agapia Monastery, where he put on the angelic image of the hermit. In that famous hesychastic hearth, he surpassed many hermits, and he became a worker of the Prayer to Jesus, teacher, and father of the fathers. After many years of deep humbleness and of ceaseless prayer, Bishop Isaiah yielded his soul in the hands of the lord, in the year 1592, and he was buried next to the church.

[180] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1957, p. 351; Fr. prof. Mircea Păcurariu, "Chronological Lists of the Hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church", In B.O.R. Review, XCIII (1975), no. 3-4, pp. 322-355.

METROPOLITAN THEOPHANOUS II
Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava
(† 1598)

The second metropolitan, Theophanous was the disciple of the highly-taught Bishop Makarius from Roman, and both of them became monks at Rîşca Monastery. There he grew up spiritually, learning from his teacher the fear of God, the knowledge of the Holy Gospel, and the spelling in Greek.

Having a highly-spiritualized living, by the will of God, in the year 1564 he was appointed "from his youth" Metropolitan of Moldavia, by Voivode Alexandru Lăpuşneanu. And everybody loved him for his humbleness and of the kindness of his heart. This souly shepherd often visited the villages and the holy monasteries and he helped much the monks who were living as hermits through forests and on mountains. He also took a special care of the Romanian monks from Mount Athos, where he was sent by the voivode to bring money for the renewal, from the ground, of the Dochiaru Monastery (1564-1568). He supervised those works, he helped painting the church, and he took part to the church's consecration. That monastery became one of the most beautiful Athonite monasteries.

In the year 1568 Metropolitan Theophanous tonsured Voivode Alexandru Lăpuşneanu in monasticism, under the name Pachomius, and he too buried the voivode in the church of Slatina Monastery. Later on, under the reigning of Voivode John the Valiant, because of being banished from his chair, he lived in ascesis together with his disciples, on the mountains near to Rarău. There they made monastic cells for themselves, on the top of the hill called up to these days as the "Foot of the Metropolitan", and they lived there in fasting and in prayer for several years. In the year 1577 he was again called to his chair by Voivode Peter the Lame, so that he shepherded the Church of Moldavia for other four years. In the year 1581, because of the often changing of voivodes, Metropolitan Theophanous sook refuge in Poland. After e year he is recalled to his chair, where he remained for other five years. Because at that mirky time there was no other better shepherd in Moldavia than Metropolitan Theophanous.

So, by advising the ship of the Church of Christ through heavy waves for 17 years, and by manly enduring many troubles, persecutions, and dangers, in the year 1587 Metropolitan Theophanous II willingly withdrew himself from the chair and left for Dochiaru Monastery from Mount Athos. There he lives as a great hermit for other 12 years, surpassing many monks by his harsh ascesis, so that he was known and honored on all-over Mount Athos. Pious Metropolitan Theophanous was the first Romanian hierarch who became Athonite hermit and he was a famous adviser and spiritual father, both to Romanian monks and to many monks of diverse nationalities from Mount Athos.

Reaching the measure of the great Athonite hermits, in the year 1598, Blessed Metropolitan Theophanous yielded his soul in the hand of Christ and he was buried in the narthex of the Dochiaru Monastery, where his tomb can be seen today. The monks from there listed him among the great founders and he count him in the group of the pious Athonite fathers. After a few years, the wife of Voivode Ieremia Movilă bestowed money for a head-stone to be placed at his tomb, and it is written on that stone the inscription: "Of, you tomb, for God's sake, what dead you contain? Answer that, quickly, who is within you? O, you foreigner, (I have) Theophanous, that one loved by everybody, the extolled hierarch of Moldavia, whose illustrious coffin, Elisabeta, the wife of the all-enlightened Ieremia, being happy for being a relative of Theophanous, she adorned it as due, from far, towards remembrance and for she to be rewarded. May the heavens with its glory to give you long and illustrious happiness, in the year 1598".

On the beautifully painted portrait from the wall of the church, near to the tomb, there are also these words: "The Illustrious shepherd of Moldavia, Theophanous".

Pious Fathers
From the centuries XVI-XVII

SAINT JOHN THE ARCHBISHOP
Rîşca Monastery
(Centuries XVI-XVII)[181]

a. His Life

This holy hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church originated form Suceava Country. His parents were called Gheorghe and Anastasia. Around the year 1560 he entered, as spiritual son of Bishop Makarius of Roman, the community of Rîşca Monastery, and later on he reached to be abbot and confessor. Between the years 1598-1605 he was Bishop of Huşi, and then Bishop of Rădăuţi between the years 1605-1608, when he was elected Metropolitan of Moldavia. But he renounced to the chair and he withdrew himself at the monastery where he became monk, and after a short while he moved to the eternal life. His life, so holy, it remains to us mostly unknown, being hidden into Christ. The first to make him known and honored like saint was Pious Metropolitan Dositheos of Moldavia.

b. Deeds Useful to the Soul

1. Pious John of Rîşca, "the holy and wonderful archbishop", as he was called by Metropolitan Dositheos, he was called by Christ, from his youth, to the monastic life, and he had as teacher and adviser Bishop Makarius of Roman, who was his abbot and confessor. From him he learnt the knowledge of the book, and from the pious confessors and hermits form the mountains he learnt the angelic work of the Prayer of the Heart, and the guarding of the mind against the thoughts coming from the devils. Thus, in a short time, he accomplished long years, reaching the measure of the consummate man.

2. This chosen vessel of the Holy Ghost had, especially, two great good deeds: the clean prayer accompanied by tears, and an untold love for Christ and for people. Through these two good deeds he defeated all the enemy's temptations and, by cleaning his mind and heart, he reached to be Christ bearer, full of gentleness and of humbleness. At that time there was no other more advanced than he was, in all Moldavia's monasteries. He was also a great worker and teacher of the Prayer of the Heart.

3. Being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, Pious John become abbot and great spiritual father in Rîşca Monastery, for he had mercy on everybody and he comforted them with chosen spiritual words and he advised them towards the spiritual climbing by the example of his life. This abbot gathered around himself numerous monks, and he accomplished the spiritual work started by Bishop Makrius at Rîşca Monastery. He also visited the hermits from Rîşca Mountains, he brought to them the All-Clean Mysteries and he tarried in their monastic cells, especially during the holy fasting periods, for within his soul there was Christ resting Himself. Under the guidance of this holy abbot, Rîşca Monastery reached its biggest spiritual flourishing.

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[181] Metropolitan Dositheos, *The Lives of the Saints*, Iasi, 1686, vol. IV, f. 152; Fr. Livius Stan, *The Saints of Romanian*, Sibiu, 1945, p. 54-55; Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu, *cited work*, pp. 76-79.

4. For such an ascesis, Pious John was found worthy of the gift of working miracles and of knowing the future. Due to that reason, many believers form villages were running to him, they asked him for his holy prayers, they confessed him their sins, and they received health. That was for he was a souly father to everybody and everyone honored him as a holy man and full of grace.

5. In the year 1574, when the pagans invaded, they preyed numerous villages and monasteries form the central Moldavia. Many people escaped their death by the prayer and mercy of Saint John. Then, by knowing in his ghost that Rîşca Monastery too was about to be plundered by Turks, the pious took vigil for the whole night and together with the entire congregation, and they officiated the Holy Liturgy and he Imparter the people with the Body and Blood of Christ. And in the morning, he blessed them, he gave them food, and he sent them to hide themselves in the mountains. Finally, the abbot took the bells donated by the founders and he sank them into the monastery's pound, in order not to be found and melted down by pagans. Also, be buried the cultic objects and, he took with him the icon of Saint Hierarch Nicholas, the patron of that holy place and, they kneeled and so they went around the church together with eth fathers. Then, after kissing on one another, they scattered on the mountains, to the monastic cells of the blessed hermits, and there they tarried for around three years, until the country got peaceful again.

6. Seeing the Metropolitan and the voivode of Moldavia the ascesis of Pious Abbot John, in the year 1598 they appointed him Bishop of Huşi, against his will, so that he shepherded the flock of Christ for 7 years. For he lived the same life as he did in the monastery and he was always surrounded by people. He shepherded the Bishopric of Rădăuţi for three more years. Then he was appointed as Metropolitan of Moldavia but, because he loved more the quietude and the prayer than the passing honor, Pious Archbishop John asked for forgiveness and he withdrew himself to the blessed quietude, at Rîşca Monastery. There, after a short while, living in prayer and in humbleness, he yielded his soul in the hands of Great Hierarch Jesus Christ.

Saint Hierarch John, pray to God for us!

PIOUS JOHN THE HERMIT
Rîşca Monastery
(Centuries XVI-XVII)

Hieroschemamonk John was one of the disciples of Saint Archbishop John form Rîşca Monastery. He firstly lived in ascesis at the monastery where he became a monk, until his great teacher and spiritual father moved to the eternal life. Then, by wanting a hermit-like life, he withdrew himself on the mountain, one the Valley of Rîşcuţa Creek, and there he lived as hermit in piousness and being well-pleasant to God, for more than 30 years.

This hermit became a famous worker of the Prayer to Jesus and a great prayer-worker of the Romanian nation. He advanced so much in ascesis and in cogitating at the godlike things, that during prayer his face was lightened by the gift of the Holy Ghost and he knew the things to come. His monastic cell made of wood and soil, it was in a small withdrawn glade, situated 3 kilometers higher on the mountain than the monastery. That glade has been called up to these days as "the Glade of John". There the pious had a few disciples, as small chapel for prayer, and a small vegetables garden. In that glade lived as hermits highly spiritualized hermits, being that glade a place for quietude for the monks from Rîşca Monastery. It is believed that at that place too, Blessed Archbishop John withdrew together with is community, because of fearing the Turks, while he was abbot of Rîşca Monastery.

So, much toiling in ascesis and enduring not few temptations form the cunning devil, Pious John the Hermit yielded his soul in the arms of Christ and he was counted among the group of the pious fathers.

PIOUS FATHERS
EULOGIUS, POEMEN, MISAIL, BASIL, AND PAISIUS
The Older Agapia Hermitage
(Centuries XVI-XVII)

Between the Chairs Mountains and the Glade of Euphrosyne, there is a small glade called as "the glade with old and fruitful trees", planted by the first fathers who built Agapia Hermitage and the small wooden church on stone foundation. That place has been called up to these days as "The Orchard of the Fathers".

In that orchard existed, around the Centuries XVI-XVII, a cemetery where the monks form Older Agapia Monastery were buried. There, "in the orchard of the fathers have been discovered tombs, after occasional diggings, coffins made of oak trunks, cut and carved to the dimensions of the dead one, and the dead body from inside those coffins was wrapped in linens and having a brick under his head. Some of them had at their neck a cross made of led, mentioning the name of the dead on a side, or on an edge…". The local tradition tells us that among the numerous hermits from Neamţ Mountains, especially of those from Older Agapia, there were many men among them with holy life, whose bodies were buried there and after much time they were ascertained as holy, so that they were taken out and brought as holy relics in other countries Russia, Greece…".

Among the pious hermits from Older Agapia, whose honored holy relics are resting in the old cemetery from "the Orchard of the fathers", there were identified in the year 1838 five names of schemamonk and of hieroschemamonk, namely: Eulogius, Pimen, Misail, Basil, and Paisius. The bodies of those pious fathers were placed in thick oak trunks; they had heavy

led crosses on their chest and their yellow bones had a good fragrance. They lived in ascesis at Older Agapia, both in the community and as hermits on the surrounding mountains, until the middle of the Century XVIII, when the monks used to wear on their chests heavy crosses made of led, and they were buried in coffins carved in oak tree trunks. Metropolitan Dositheos knew some of them while they were still alive, and about other he only heard, as himself confessed: "also among Romanians there are many whose life and living I have seen, but they haven't been searched for..."[182].

Only God Who examines the hearts and the entrails of the people, only He knows the way which these holy hermits lived in ascesis in, or the good deeds they committed in their life. But the heavy crosses made of led and the coffins which they were buried in, they proof the harsh ascesis they adopted. For all of them were great workers of the Prayer to Jesus and they lived in consummate quietude and godlike joy, keeping their mind clean of thoughts and resting their bodied with the restraint and with the vigil.

Today, the bodies of these pious father and prayer-workers of our nation are resting, forgotten in the "Orchard of the Fathers" from Older Agapia, and their souls ceaselessly sing, together with the angels, in heavens, the glories of God!

Saint Holy Pious Fathers, pray to God for us!

PIOUS ARCHIMANDRITE PHILOTHEUS THE TEACHER
Putna Monastery
(Centuries XVI-XVII)

Pious Archimandrite Philotheos was one of the most taught teachers of the spiritual school form Putna Monastery, where he learnt, form his youth, the fear of God and the toil of the good deeds. His rich knowledge in theology, in patristics, in catechesis, and even in philosophy, he received them both in Putna Monastery and at Athos Mountain where he lived in ascesis for a few years.

From the great Athonite teachers Pious Philotheos learnt the deepest knowledge of the Orthodox teaching, the dogmas, the morals, the ascesis, the rhetorics, the philosophy, and the writings of the Holy Fathers. Then, after getting sufficiently enlightened, and knowing well Greek and Slavonic, he returned to Putna Monastery. This pious was also a skilled worker of the prayer, a confessor, and a teacher of Romanian, and a good calligrapher.

So, by taking under his leadership the school of Putna Monastery, in a short while he increased the school's fame so much that there was no other more famous school in the while Country of Moldavia. There came to be taught, by Archimandrite Philotheos, tens of monks from Putna, Moldoviţa, Humor, Suceava, and numerous young priests from villages. Ad the good teacher and

[182] Metropolitan Dositheos, *cited work*, f. 152.

servant of Christ, helped by a famous teacher called "Antonie the First-Singer" (1589), and he toiled so much with his disciples that many of them learnt Greek and Slavonic. Others learnt the craftsmanship of the Prayer to Jesus, and others reached to be famous chief-singers in monasteries, skilled calligraphers, copyists and miniaturists of churchly books[183].

One of his disciples was also "the much sinner hermit Isaiah" from Moldoviţa Monastery. This one, after being educated at Putna, he reached to be a hermit and he copied a *Book of the Four Gospels*, (the end of the Century XVI) for Moldoviţa Monastery. On the first page he wrote the following dedication, as gratitude sign: "To all-enlightened and all-holy and by God choses our teacher sir hieromonk Archimandrite Philotheos form Putna"[184].

This teacher of the Romanian monasticism and theology form the century XVI, he made the Putna Monastery's school to become a true theological academy. Refusing to climb the steps of becoming a hierarch, he remained into the humbleness of the monastic life until the end of his life. But by his wisdom and by his way of living he enlightened many and he built them souly, and that's why everybody called him as "all-enlightened and all-holy and by God chosen and our teacher". His name was known all the way to Pecersca, in Athos, ad even at the Patriarchy of Constantinople, and all of them were charmed by his ascesis and humbleness.

So lived in ascesis this great teacher, confessor, and servant of the Church of Christ, for around 30 years, confessing the right-faith, teaching the monk and the priests the knowledge of the Holy Gospel, accustoming many to the secret prayer and giving birth to numerous spiritual sons.

Then, feeling himself called to the eternal life, e gave to his disciples the last kiss and he fell asleep, peacefully, in Putna Monastery, at the beginning of the Century XVII.

PIOUS IEREMIA THE ROMANIAN (THE VLACH) (1556-1625)[185]

Pious Ieremia, baptized John, he was born on 29th of June 1556, in a village form the center of Moldavia, called Sasca, Suceava Country, to a n Orthodox family having seven children. His parents, Costişte Stoica and Margareta of Man, they gave him a good raising in the right-faith, in prayer, in mercy, and if love for God and for people. They also awoke in him the zeal for the monastic life. Once, while the young John was working in the field with his

[183] The *Archives* and *The Remembrance List of Putna Monastery*.
[184] That *Book of Four Gospels* it is preserved today at the library of Dragomirna Monastery, under the inventory no. 1776/687.
[185] Francesco Severini, *Ieremia the Vlach, a Romanian Monk in Italy*, Milan, 1982; *A Saint Romanian Pilgrim*, Cluj; Fr. Liviu Stan, *The Romanian Saints*, Sibius, 1945, p. 76.

father, his father told him: "Son, do you see those flying birds? Likewise fly in heavens the souls of the good mons!".

When he was 19, John left his parental house and worked for a short time in Alba Iulia. There he found out that a doctor from Italy, called Pietro Giacomo, who was there for treating the Prince of Transylvania, was looking for a companion on the road back to his country. By the Providence of God, John accompanied that doctor to Bari – Italy. It was around the year 1575. Remaining alone, poor, and stranger, he didn't know where to go. So, after he prayer with many tears to God and to the Mother of the lord, he was urged to withdraw himself in a Capucine monastery, called "Saint Ephraem". There he had been received and after a certain time he was tonsured in monasticism bearing the name "Ieremia de Vlach", namely the Romanian.

Being illiterate, but being also very merciful and loving the strangers, he was appointed and worked for a long time at the infirmary, taking care of ill people. He surpassed all the other inhabitants of the monastery by the strength of his faith, by his humbleness, with his gentleness, with the prayer, with the total rejection of the earthly things, with the love for the neighbor, and at taking acre of the ill people. For all these virtues, but especially for the humbleness and for the holiness of his life, he was found worthy by God of the gift of working miracles, and he healed many ill people. His usual prayer for the patients was this: "The power of God the Father, the wisdom of God the Son, and the grace of the Holy Ghost to deliver you of all evil!". With this prayer he worked many healings and he comforted those who were suffering. Lo some of the miracles committed by Pious Ieremia. Once he banished form the garden of the monastery the worms which were eating the cabbage, only by prayer and by spreading it with holy water. On other occasion he healed a young girl of measles, but uttering his usual prayer and by marking the sign of the cross upon her head; and in the year 1616 he healed a child of leprosy, and he healed also the child's father who was very ill.

Father Ieremia had his face permanently enlightened by a heavenly joy, which he was conveying to everybody who came to him. Then he was very merciful. When he was leaving the monastery, he took every food he could find and he gave it to people in need he encountered on his way. Sometimes the brothers asked him: "What are you going to do with these, father?". And he gently answered their questions: "The poor, the poor! We have eaten, but they had nothing to eat!". On other occasions he was urging the people who were visiting him: "Be merciful! Do good with an open heart! Christ came from heavens on earth out of love for having mercy on all of us. Let's have mercy on people from around us!".

Thus, Pious Ieremia had a soul devoted to mercifulness, to sacrifice for the neighbor, to taking care of the suffering – virtues by and large specific to Romanian monks. BY mercifulness and by humbleness he surpassed all the monks form that monastery, even the most taught, for the Lord says: "*I want mercy, not sacrifice!*". That's why there was a saying among the brothers there: "*May you have the mercifulness of Pious Ieremia the Romanian!*". With his love

and prayer, Pious Ieremia was healing many ill people, he was comforting many broken hearts, and he was strengthening everybody in faith and hope. For there were he entered, there entered too the joy of the Holy Ghost. That's why, all the ill people form infirmary wanted to be cared especially by him; all the poor people wanted to receive alms from him; all the believers form that area visited him with faith and they wanted to listen to his advice. And that for he was full of the love for God, he had a merciful heart, he was sweet at words, and he was totally detached from the earthly things. Though he wasn't ordained priest and he was appointed to the most inferior tasks, for his humbleness and love he was the most honored and visited in that monastery. Each time he heard that somebody was ill or sad, he examined that person serenely, he brought to that person some alms, and so he succeeded in banishing away the pain and the sadness of the heart. And when some people asked him how could he do those, he answered: "*Giving of alms repairs everything!*".

The fame of the miraculous healings and of his mercy for the poor and suffering made Pious Ieremia known in the whole Naple country. Many ill people called him at their houses to alleviate their pains and, due to his prayers, they were healed. It was enough to him hearing that somebody in a village was ill, that he immediately took some food and he went to the ill person's house. After he prayer there and marked that ill person with the sign of the cross on top of the head, he gave to that person to eat some bread, or fruits, telling to that person: "Take, brother, and eat. They will help you for they are blessed!".

Pious Ieremia was a monk of the prayer. Especially at night, when everybody else were sleeping, he was praying in isolated places, until the church's bells rang. And he was never absent from the church's religious services, regardless how occupied and tired he was. Sometimes he told to the brothers from the monastery: "We have everything we need and we do not lack anything, neither are we burdened by the troubles of the life. That's why we owe to pray for the poor, for the suffering, for everybody who trusts us, and who ask us with zeal and with faith to pray for them!".

Once, when he was going to the church and he was alone, he saw the devil in a human countenance standing at the entrance. "What are you doing here?" the pious asked the devil. "I am waiting for the monks who are late to prayer, to tempt them and to make them fall asleep during the Liturgy?". Then the devil disappeared for he knows how much power the prayer has, and especially the Holy Liturgy. Because of being illiterate, Pious Ieremia loved these two prayers the most: "*Our Father*" and "*Rejoice, Mary, for Youa re full of grace*!", and he was always repeating those prayers attentively and piously, when accomplishing his tasks.

In the spring of the year 1625, when Pious Ieremia was 69, of which 47 in monasticism, he was called to an ill man living in a faraway locality. ON the way, because it was freezing outside, he caught pneumonia. He felt his end near, he asked everybody for forgiveness, he recie3ved the Body and the Blood

of the Lord and, yielding his soul peacefully, he uttered his last words: "*I am dying joyfully in obedience and in love*".

So lived and died, in a foreign country, this great Moldavia monk, being totally full of humbleness, of patience, of angelic living, and of immortal love for God and for people. He didn't know how to read or how to write. He didn't even know well the language of his host country. But he knew how to pray simply and with a clean heart. He knew how to live beautifully, in poverty for the earthly things, but full of the peace of the ghost and of the joy of the heavenly things. That's why he was found worthy of the gift of working miracles, and of knowing the things to come. His simple and clean faith, his humbleness, his mercifulness, and his godlike love, virtues which are so common among our Romanian monks, they made Pious Ieremia "the Romanian" holy and immortal. This is for the saints don't have country or frontiers. They are universal, common, and immortal to all the world by the holiness of their life and by being they overshadowed by the grace of the Holy Ghost. And for the saints are canonized and honored firstly by people and then after by Church, likewise Pious Ieremia the Romanian was honored as saints while he was still living, by all the believers from that area. Then, after three years from his death, he was counted among the blessed.

On 30th of October 1983, the Western Church officially canonized Pious Ieremia, counting him among the saints. But he remains a Romanian saint, and Orthodox saint according to his soul and deeds. A saint of all the Christians loving Christ, form past and present, sprouted out on this land blessed by God.

HIEROSCHEMAMONK DOSITHEOS THE TEACHER
Abbot at Zosimus Hermitage – Secu
(1582-1606)[186]

The first monastic settlement documentarily attested on the Secu Valley form Neamț Country, it was a small hermitage dating from the time of Voivode Alexandru Lăpușneanu, founded by a few hermits-monks from Neamț Monastery. And the first founder who built there a church and a few monastic cells, in the second half of the Century XVI, it was the treasurer Zisin (Schemamonk Zoisimus).

Among the first monks withdrawn in this isolated from the world hermitage, it was Schemamonk Dositheus, a great teacher and adviser of souls, who became monk at Neamț Monastery. For 40 years as the Zosimus's Hermitage lasted, Pious Dositheos was like a pillar and like a spiritual father leading his community, a community composed of over 50 hermits. He taught everybody the fear of God, the obedience, the humbleness, and the

[186] Alexandru I. Conta, "A Cultural Settlement from Alexandru Lăpușneanu on Secu Valley, before the Foundation of Nestor Ureche – the Hermitage of Zosimus", in *Metropolitanate of Moldavia*, 1962, no. 9-12, pp. 694-712.

craftsmanship of the monastic ascesis, for he was skilled at interpreting the Holy Scriptures and he was famous for his wisdom allover Moldavia, up to the voivode himself. It is said also about him that he was a good knower of Greek and Slavonic, and he knew as few others the dogmas of the Orthodox Church. He founded also a school, where the monks were studying. That school was led by a teacher.

One of the most famous disciples of Abbot Dositheos was himself the great Metropolitan Barlaam Motoc, who lived at Zosimus's Hermitage more than 25 years. The spiritual and theological wisdom of the disciple showed the measure of the ascetic toils and of the knowledge mastered by his teacher.

Pious Dositheos was a skilled adviser and confessor of the hermits who were living in ascesis in the ancestral forests from Secu Valley. Also, he helped much to the building anew of the foundation of Nestor Ureche (16032), near to Zosimus's Hermitage, and he was the first abbot of Secu Monastery between the years 1602-1606. This abbot made of his community a true monastic hearth famous all over Moldavia.

On 21st of August 1606, Pious Dositheus left in his place Hieroschemamonk Andrei, one of his spiritual sons, and he moved to the resting of Christ, mourned by all his disciples and by all hermit from the Secu Valley.

PIOUS ISAIAH THE HERMIT
Moldoviţa Monastery
(Centuries XVI-XVII)

Around Moldoviţa Monastery (before the year 1402), as actually everywhere, there were living in ascesis since Centuries XIII-XIV, a few forgotten by the world hermits. Some of them remained unknow until and after their death, others lived for a while withdrawn as hermits in the forests' glades, and then they withdrew again in monasteries.

One of those hermits was also Pious Schemamonk Isaiah. He firstly lived in ascesis at Moldoviţa Monastery, in the second half of the Century XVI, reaching to be a very advanced monk in the spiritual aspects. Then, he wanted to learn even more, so that he was sent by his abbot to the famous spiritual school form Putna Monastery. There shone at that time two great teachers: Antony the Chief-Singer and Archimandrite Philoteus. From the first one Isaiah leant the typicon and how to sing psalms, and from the "all-enlightened" teacher Philotheos he learnt Greek, Slavonic, the knowledge of the Holy Scripture, and the most chosen works of the Holy Saints. At Putna he also learnt the craftsmanship of the calligraphy and of adorning the churchly books with miniatures.

Returned to Moldoviţa Monastery, Pious Isaiah spent his time as chief-singer and as teacher at the school of the monastery. Then, for he aspired to

become as the great hermits from yore, he withdrew himself to quietude, in the forests from around the monastery. There, he made a shack for himself and he was living in ascesis, day and night, in fasting, in prayer, and in taking heed at himself. The All-Clean Mysteries were received by him from the monastery, where he descended on holidays, and the food and the clothing he was earning them with the work of his hands. This was for he was a good calligrapher, so that he was copying books for religious service and for churches and he received, in exchange, what he needed.

The most precious manuscript copied by Pious Isaiah, while he was a hermit, it is a beautiful *Book of the Four Gospels* written at the request of the Abbot from Moldoviţa Monastery, during the reigning of Ieremia Movilă (1595-1606). On the page no. 257 it is written this note: "I the much sinner hermit Isaiah toiled and wrote". And on the first page it is written the dedication of Hermit Isaiah addressed as gratitude sign to "All-enlightened and all-sanctified by God and our chosen teacher, sir Hieromonk Archimandrite Philotheos from Putna". On the same first page, Schemamonk Isaiah noted this too: "Voivode Ieremia Movilă, by the mercy of God lord of Moldavia, write a request to our abbot from Moldoviţa Monastery and to our entire community"[187]. It is about a letter of the voivode which he asked in to be remembered by monks in their holy prayers.

After many years of living a hermit life, Pious Isaiah turned back to the community of Moldoviţa Monastery, where he lived a little longer and, being well-pleasant to God, he moved to the heavenly dwelling places in the first decades of the century XVII.

PIOUS VUCOL, GIDEON, AND GHERMAN
Hermits on Ceahlău Mountain
(Centuries XVI-XVII)

These three pious hermits became monks at Ceahlău Hermitage and at Peon Monastery, which were situated on this holy Romanian mountain called Ceahlău. After in the first place they had been accustomed to the ascesis of the monastic life in the community, they put on the angelic image of the hermit-like life, and they withdrew themselves to quietude in the deep of the ancestral forests from the Valley of Durău Creek, where there were living in ascesis many bearers-of Christ hermits. Then they carved three caved form themselves, in the rock from under Ceahlău's peak, and there they lived in ascesis, in fasting, in prayer, and in desiring God.

Their ascesis was the following: day and night they had their mind elevated to God, through ceaseless prayer and hope for the future goods. They spent the whole week on the mountain, alone, not seeing anybody and eating

[187] *The Remembrance List of* Moldoviţa Monastery. *The Book of Four Gospels* is kept at the Library of Dragomirna Monastery.

once a day, after sunset. On holidays they gathered together at the monastic cell of a hermit and there they officiated the Holy Liturgy and they received the Body and the Blood of the Lord. They received the things they needed, through their disciples, from the monasteries where they became monks.

So lived in ascesis Pious Vucol, Gideon, and Gherman, for 30 years, shining like three torches on Ceahlău Mountain, and ceaselessly praying for themselves and for the salvation of the world. Then, reaching and old aged and being they well-pleasant to God, they passed away peacefully, in the first three decades of the Century XVII, and they were counted in the group of the pious fathers[188]. Their caves can be seen even today, and those caved bear the names of their former inhabitants[189].

"The group of the hermits is blessed, of those who wing themselves with the godlike longing!".

PIOUS PANCRATIUS THE ARCHIMANDRITE
Sucevița Monastery
(Centuries XVI-XVII)

This loving-of Christ archimandrite was a disciple of Metropolitan Gheorghe Movilă, while he was abbot of Sucevița Monastery (1563? – 1579). Then, for he aspired to live a hermit life, he became a hermit, with the blessing of his teacher, on a hill near to the monastery that has been called, up to these days, as "the Hill of Pancratius". There, he dug up a monastic cell for himself, in the middle of the forest, and he lived there in ascesis for more than 20 years, in ceaseless prayer, in fasting, and in vigil, enduring many temptations form the devil. His name became known in all the villages from Suceița Valley, and many believers were searching for him for his blessing and for useful words. he also had the gift of healing the illnesses, for he became clean vessel of the Holy Ghost.

In the year 1610, Pious Pancratius was elected abbot and spiritual father of Sucevița Monastery, which he guided wisely for 15 years. As abbot he multiplied the number of the monks to more than 50 prayer-workers, among whom some of them lived in community while others lived as hermits in the forests form around Sucevița Monastery. Archimandrite Pancratius had all of them obeying him, and he accustomed them to the fear of God, to humbleness, and to the ceaseless prayer, which is the mother of all good deeds. Pious Pancratius took care of the good management of the monastery, renewing the

[188] Fr. C. Mătasă, *The Guide of Neamț Country*, Bucharest, 1939, p. 104; *Ibid*, The Palcace of teh Princesi, 1935, pp. 1-46.

[189] At a few kilometers higher than Durău Monastery, where it was also a small hermitage, there are several caves and remnants of monastic cells under the rocks of Ceahlău Mountain, among which also "the Cave of Vucol", "the Cave of Gideon", and "the Cave of Gherman".

monastic cells of those living in community and of the hermits, and giving many alms to the villagers from Sucevița Valley. He was also very honored and searched for by the believers, "having much influence upon the people from villages".

Thus, after finishing the trip of this live, according to the word of the *Holy Gospel*, he moved to the heavenly dwelling places, in the first decades of the Century XVII[190].

BISHOP EPHRAEM OF RĂDĂUȚI
Moldovița Monastery
(† 1629)

Pious Bishop Ephraem became monk at Moldovița Monastery, and he originated from Suceava Country. So, after he heard about the good ascesis of the monks from Moldovița Monastery, he became a monk there in the second half of Century XVI, and in a short while he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood. Then, he was for several years ecclesiarch and confessor of the community from Moldovița Monastery, raising many spiritual sons and building everybody with his humbleness, gentleness, and wisdom. This was because he was accustomed since his childhood to reading and understanding the Holy Scripture, and to the teaching of the Holy Fathers which he learnt in the monastery's school form famous teachers.

Towards the end of the Century XVI, Pious Ephraem was elected abbot of Moldovița Monastery, spiritually guiding that community between the years 1595-1607 and gathering around himself up to 60 monks. During that period, Moldovița Monastery experienced an epoque of highly spiritual and cultural flourishing. There were educated confessors and abbots skilled din advising the human souls, and there were also good calligraphers copying books for the religious service in the churches, among whom there was also Isaiah the Hermit. Around Moldovița Monastery there were living in ascesis numerous hermits who enjoyed his help. The name of Ephraem was known to the Voivode of Moldavia, Ieremie Movilă, who granted him numerous helps for the monastery and "write an ask to the Abbot from Moldovița Monastery and to the entire community there".

For the wisdom of his live, Pious Ephraem was called by God to the level of the hierarch, being ordained as Bishop of Huși in the year 1607. After a short while, he was appointed on the chair of the Rădăuți Bishopric, well advising the flock of Christ for 15 years (1608-1614, 1616-1623). His first care was that of building churches in all villages and to ordain literate priests who to be able to guide the people on the path of the salvation. He also took care of strengthening the spiritual life in the monasteries and hermitages form his eparchy, appointing enlightened abbots who were advanced in good deeds.

[190] Dimitrie Dan, *Sucevița Monastery*, Bucharest, 1923, pp. 45, 102.

At the monastery where he became a monk, Bishop Ephraem built in the year 1612 a beautiful chapel that has been preserved until today. He also gave to the same monastery a few books for religious service, calligraphed by himself, namely a *Bood of the Four Gospels* (1613), a *Book of Psalms* (1614), and an *Octoechos*. On this last manuscript there is a note: "By the will of the Father and with the help of the Son and with the committing of the Holy Ghost, lo that I, the servant of Lord God, Ephraem, Bishop of Rădăuţi, I have deigned and I have desired from the whole my heart and I have given from my rightful earning, to be written the holy *Octoechos* that stays before them who look at it, as my prayer for me and for my parents and I have given this *Octoechos* to the holy Moldoviţa Monastery..."[191].

Living so in ascesis the humble Bishop Ephraem and by much toiling for the salvation of his flock, in the year 1623 he withdrew himself to the monastery where he first became a monk in his youth. Then, he had prepared his tomb in advance, and he yielded his soul in the hands of God, in the year 1626. His tomb in the in the cemetery of Moldoviţa Monastery, and it bears the following inscription: "This is the tomb of His Eminence our father Mister Ephraem, Bishop of Rădăuţi (where) he is buried, and where he promised himself to God and to His Holy Mother, form his youth, His eternal remembrance in the year 1626".

METROPOLITAN ANASTASIUS CRIMCA
Of Moldavia and of Suceava
(† 1631)[192]

a. His life

This great Metropolitan of Moldavia was born at Suceava, around the half of the Century XVI, to parents who loved Christ very much, called John and Christina. His baptism name was Elijah.

During the reigning of Peter the Lame (1582-1591), the young Elijah Crimca was deacon of chancellery and soldier. Then, he renounced to the earthly things and he became a monk at Putna Monastery. In a short time, he reached to be abbot of Galata Monastery from Iaşi. In the year 1600 he was elected Bishop of Rădăuţi. But in the same years he withdrew at Dragormina Monastery, where he built a small stone church and where he founded a hermitage of monks.

In the year 1606 he was elected Bishop of Roman, and in December 1607 he was elected Metropolitan of Moldavia and of Suceava, and he activated there until the year 1617 when he withdrew himself to Dragomirna Monastery

[191] Prof I. Zugrav, "Three Liturgical Manuscripts from Bishop Ephraem of Rădăuți, in the Review *M.M.*, XXXIX (1963), no. 7-8, pp. 456-472.

[192] *The History of the Romanian Church*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1957, pp. 343-345; Fr. Prof. Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, Sibiu, pp. 105-107.

founded by himself in the year 1609. Between the years 1619-1629 he shepherded again the Church of Moldavia. Then, he withdrew himself to his foundation and he passed away on 19th of January 1631.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Metropolitan Anastasius was chosen from the arms of his mother to be spiritual shepherd of the Church of Christ. His parents John and Christina raised him in the fear of God as a precious Jewelry, providing him with a totally exquisite Christian education. Thus, his father taught him the manhood and the souly strength, which make a man steadfast and long-enduring the diverse trials of the life: and his good mother taught him to be humble, with an open heart to the godlike beauties, fiery in his prayers and loving of people.

2. In his youth, being a soldier in the Moldavian Army, it is said about him that he was really valiant in fighting the Cossacks who often plundered the villages and the monasteries. And it is said about him that, by strengthening himself with the cross of Christ and being him skilled and full of courage, he was easily defeating the invaders. For all these things he was rewarded by the Lord of Moldavia with a big stretch of land, where he later built the beautiful Dragomirna Monastery.

3. Remaining in the army for a few years, the young Elijah Crimca was urged by the Holy Ghost to become a solder of Christ. So, by renouncing top the earthly things, he had entered the community of Putna Monastery, and he became there a monk under the name Anastasius. Here Monk Anastasius learnt the much-skilled craftsmanship of painting miniatures and of copying books. There, in the school of Putna Monastery the soldier of Christ learnt the craftsmanship of the spiritual fight and the good monastic ascesis.

4. Seeing the fathers the humbleness and the intelligence of the mind of Monk Anastasius, they immediately ordained him priest and, at the request of the voivode they sent him as abbot to Galata Monastery that had been recently built. Ad be guided that holy place so beautifully that all the people there were loving him and many believers had him as their spiritual father. After he formed at Galata a well-organized community composed of good disciples, in the year 1600 Archimandrite Atanasius was ordained Bishop of Rădăuţi.

5. Withdrawing himself from his chair because of the hardships of that time, Bishop Anastasius lived as hermit for 6 years, at Dragomirna. There he built a small church, he gathered around himself a few disciples, and they were occupying themselves with the reading of the holy books, with the painting of icons, and with the copying of manuscripts, guiding many souls towards Christ.

6. For his wisdom and humbleness, in the year 1607 Bishop Anastasius was elected Metropolitan of Moldavia, and so he shepherded the Church of Christ for 20 years. The first his care was that of strengthening the spiritual life in monasteries and villages.

In all monasteries he appointed chosen abbots, advanced in good deeds and knowers of foreign languages. The most famous of them all was the abbot

of Secu Monastery, Archimandrite Barlaam. In cities and villages, he ordained literate priests able to guide the people on the path of the *Gospel* of Christ. Thus, under the long shepherding of Metropolitan Anastasius, the monasteries and the hermitages form Moldavia lived an epoque of chose spiritual flourishment. Also, in the isolated hermitages from the Carpathian Mountains the number of the hermit increased, and among those hermits some of them were honored by people as saints and as miracles-workers even in their life.

7. In the year 1609, Metropolitan Anastasius built, towards the glory of the All-Holy Trinity and towards the honoring of his nation, the beautiful Dragomirna Monastery, under the patronage of the Pentecost. That monastery is, verily, the greatest altar for prayer and for comforting ever erected by a hierarch on Romanian soil, and to that monastery the metropolitan appointed good abbots and monks with community life where the godlike Liturgy has never stopped being officiated.

8. The church of Dragomirna Monastery as adorned with stone carvings on the exterior, as it is beautifully painted on the interior. This was because on the same year, the founder metropolitan appointed four painters from the monastery, namely: "Priest Crăciun, Ignatie, Matthew, and Gregory", who painted the altar, the cupola, and the nave of the church. Later on, the lord of Moldavia, Miron Barnovski, the relative of the metropolitan, he built the stronghold wall and the four defense towers. Then, the good shepherd Atanasius commanded that nobody and never make the monastery vasal to other monasteries form outside the country.

9. This blessed father of Moldavia, being in his youth and unmatched calligrapher and painter of icons, he copied and donated to his foundation 11 manuscripts adorned with beautiful miniatures, as there are no other in our country. The most exquisite manuscripts produced by Metropolitan Atanasius bestowed to Dragormina Monastery are:

A *Book of the Four Gospels* adorned with numerous miniatures, dating from the year 1610, which the author donated to the monastery "towards his remembrance and of his parents John and Christina"; another *Book of the Four Gospels* dating from the year 1614; two *Liturgy books*, one of them copied in the year 1609 and another in the year 1610; and *Apostol*, dating form the year 1610 (presently perverted at Vienna); a *Book of Psalms* dating from the year 1614, and a few other books. The Metropolitan bestowed also two *Epitaphs* worked by himself in the years 1612 and 1626, a big cross wrapped in precious metals, holy vessels, and other cultic objects.

10. Since his very first years Metropolitan Atanasius founded to his foundation a famous school of calligraphers, painters, and miniaturists, renowned all over Moldavia. In that school were educated famous calligraphers, as there were: Father Crăciun, Ignatius, Matthew, and Gregory, Deacon Dimitrie Dumitraşcu, and others, whose beautiful works were spread to other monasteries for adorning the holy churches.

11. In order to give to the monasteries and to the parishes from Moldavia an as superior and unitary rule as possible, Metropolitan Atanasius gathered

at Suceava, in the year 1626, a synod summoning all the bishop and the abbots form monasteries and they composed a new Churchly Rules Book. Bu that he aimed at removing any disorders from the Church of Moldavia and to strengthen the Orthodoxy.

12. In addition to the care he took for adorning the churches and for saving the souls, Metropolitan Atanasius took care also of alleviating the illnesses and the bodily sufferings. Thus, in the year 1610 he founded an infirmary at Dragomirna Monastery, where there were cared both monks and laymen. And in the year 1619 he founded a real hospital in Suceava City, where were healed numerous ill people. Following the example of Saint Basil the Great, Metropolitan Atanasius was the founder of the first public hospital from our country.

13. At the Monastery Saint John the New, from Suceava, Metropolitan Atanasius built a winter chapel, adding also other renewals, for his soul was burning for the zeal he had for the Lord's house. There were officiated beautiful religious services and processions with the holy relics of Saint John the New, especially during summer, when there gathered tens of thousands of pilgrims from Moldavia and Transylvania. Those were the most important days of prayer, or spiritual elevation, or unity, and of brotherhood into Christ of all the Romanians from both sides of the Carpathian Mountains.

14. Dyring each summer, especially when celebrating the patronages, the Romanians from Transylvania took pilgrimages to all the monasteries from Moldavia, and thus they were strengthened into the right-faith, in love, and in preserving the Romanian language. On their turning back over the mountains, they took numerous churchly books copied by monks, and icons, and carved, and other gifts form monasteries. Some of them were asking Metropolitan Atanasius form sending monks and abbots to the monasteries and to the hermitages from Ardeal and Maramureş. And the good shepherd always fulfilled the requests formulated by the Orthodox Romanians who were under the foreign occupation. That's why, due to the fact that Metropolitan Atanasius knew how big a role the monasteries had in the nation's life, he resisted to his death the custom of making the Romanian monasteries vassals to monasteries from outside the country.

15. In the year 1621 the Tatars invade Suceava, so that Metropolitan Atanasius took the holy relics of Saint John the New and searched tried to flee for the mountains accompanied with numerous believers. But God saw the tears of the people and by an untold miracle, the holy relics had become so heavy that the oxen cart couldn't move. Then, the great hierarch officiated Lithia and took vigil for the whole night, and he went around the city with the tabernacle of Saint Martyr John, the protector of Moldavia, and the pagans immediately ran off of the country.

16. Metropolitan Atanasius took as special care of the nuns' monastery from Pătrăuţi. There were living in ascesis up to a hundred mothers, and there was functioning, ever since the time of Stephen the Great, an infirmary financed by the state treasury. Taking a great care of ill people, the

Metropolitan often visited them and comforted them, as a good shepherd of the Church of Christ. To that monastery the Metropolitan brought his mother Christina, whom he later bestowed to Christ, by tonsuring her in monasticism.

17. Reaching the age of the consummate man prophesized by the Holy Ghost through the mouth o King David, and sharing the whole his wealth to the poor and sick people, the merciful Metropolitan Atanasius of Moldavia passed away peacefully, on 19th of January 1626, yielding his soul in the hand of God. His relics were laid to rest, until the general resurrection, in the narthex of the church from Dragomirna Monastery.

Lord, count Metropolitan Atanasius in the group of Your hierarchs!

THE TESTAMENT OF METROPOLITAN ANASTASIUS CRIMCA WRITTEN ON THE *APOSTLE* FROM VIENNA

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. One and undivided Trinity. We, the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord God, and our Savior, the worshippers of the Holy Trinity: *Mister* Atanasius Crimca, the Metropolitan of the Moldavia Country, great founder Lupu Stroici and his son Ionaşcu Stroici, Ioan Crimca and Christina, all of the worshippers of the holy monastery newly rebuilt called Dragormirna, placed under the patronage of the Holy Ghost, we confess by this letter of ours that is something happens regarding our death, regardless when, some need of the holy monastery, regardless who will be chosen by God to be the master of Moldavian Country, if some of the rulers, founders, boyars of our nation, would want to make vassals to the Holy Mountain or to Jerusalem the monks form the Moldavian Country, or to appoint abbots form a foreign monastery; may you have, as I said above, this holy monastery peaceful and undisturbed in anything, and forever. And he who will break our letter and our building, let him be anathema from our Lord God and form all the saints, amen. During the days of the blessed lord Io Constantin Moghilă Voivode, the son of Io Ieremia Moghilă Voivode, in the year 7118 (= 1610), March, the 16th.

PIOUS IOANICHIE THE SCHEMAMONK
The Hermitage of the Monastic Cells' Valley
(† 1638)

On the Dîmboviţa Valley, between Tîrgovişte and Cîmpulung, there is a high hill called "The Stronghold Hill", or "The Hill of Black Voivode". The first monastic settlement known on that hill dates from the beginning of the Century XIV, when the lord of the Romanian Country founded there a hermitage know up to these days as "Black Voivode Hermitage" (the Stronghold).

On the steep slope of the hill, on the South-Eastern side, as also on the valley of Stronghold Creek, there was one of the oldest Romanian hesychastic hearths. Between the Centuries XIII and XIV there lived in ascesis many hermits with a holy life, whose name are no longer known. That valley is called as "the Valley of the Monastic Cells" due to the big number of hermits living there.

One of the most famous hermits who lived in ascesis on the Monastic Cells Valley, during the first decades of the century XVII, was the Pious Schemamonk Ioanichie. It is believed that he became a monk at Black Voivode Hermitage from nearby, and he lived there in ascesis towards the end of the century XVI. Then, he aspired to the blessed hermit-like life, and for he was burning for the love for Christ, so that he willingly locked up himself in a cave carved in the mountain's rock and there he lived, unknown to anybody, for more than 30 years. Only his disciple was bringing him bread and water once a week. The disciple lowered those to the cave's entrance tied on a rope, because that place was very steep. The abbot of the hermitage was bringing to him the Holy Mysteries, once in a while.

How Schemamonk Ioanichie lives there in ascesis, how many temptations he endured, and what spiritual measure he reached at, only God knows. And after such a harsh ascesis, this Pious, reaching the measure of the holiness and knowing in advance his demise, he dug his tomb by himself in the back of the cave. Then he lied himself down in the tomb and yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord.

As the years passed, the name of Pious Ioanichie was forgotten, and his cave was deserted because of the abrupt slope. In the first decades of the Century XX, the abbot of the hermitage descended to the cave, tied with a rope, and he discovered there the intact bones of this great hermit, decently lying in the back of the cave. Those bones were yellow, having a good-fragrance, and covered in spiderweb. Abot the tomb were carved ins tone these words: *Ioanichie the Schemamonk 1838*.

All-Pious Father Ioanichie, pray to God for us!

PIOUS HERMITS DANIIL AND MISAIL
The Founders of Turnu Monastery
(Century XVII)

These two pious hermits Daniil the Confessor and his disciple Misail the Abbot lived in ascesis, in the first place, at Coxia Monastery, at the beginning of the century XVII. And Daniil was the first abbot of the monastery and of all hermits on the Olt Valley. And Misail was his disciple living together with him in the same monastic cell, and together worker of the commandments of Christ. Then, due to the fact that they wanted to follow the ancient saints, they withdrew themselves on the other side of the Olt River, under Mount Cozia, and they dug up there two small caves in the rock, they locked themselves up

in those and there they lived in ascesis for more than 20 years. Those caves can be seen on these days in the courtyard of Turnu Monastery, and they are well-preserved.

Around the middle of the Century XVII, due to the fact that's several disciples gathered around them, Hieroschemamonk Misal erected nearby a small wooden church having the patronage of: The Mother of the Lord Entering the Church, and so they founded the "Daniill and Misail Hermitage". Then after Pious Daniil the confessor died, Misail became abbot and spiritual father to the humble hermits.

After a short while, Abbot Misail passed away, so that Barlaam, the Metropolitan of the Romanian Country erected at Turnu a small church built in stone, in the year 1676, and he placed under the foundation of holy relics of those two pious monks. Abot their tombs are placed these inscriptions: *Daniil the Confessor* and *Misail the abbot*.

Wonderful is God into His saints, God of Israel!

PIOUS NEOPHYTE THE HERMIT
Little-Sheep-Corral Hermitage – Argeş
(Century XVII)

The tradition of the area tells to us that at the beginning of the century XVII left, in search for quietude, six mons who previously had lived in Cozia Monastery. Two of them, Daniil the Confessor and Misails the Abbot lived in ascesis at the foot of the Cozia Mountain, while four of them lived in ascesis in caves on Little-Sheep-Corral Mountain.

The most famous among the hermits from Little-Sheep-Corral was Schemamonk Neophyte. This Pious carved a cave for himself in the upper part of the Savage Mountain and there he lived in harsh ascesis and in sleepless prayer for 30 years. He was fasting for the entire week and he was praying in his cave, and on Sundays he descended to the Hermitage of Daniil and Misail from Turnu, he listened to the Holy Liturgy, and he receive the Body and the Blood of Christ.

Thus, enduring heavy temptations form the devil and achieving the gift of the tears and of healing the human sufferings, he yielded his soul in the hands of the lord, there in that cave, unknown to anybody. After several years, the bones of Pious Neophyte were discovered by a monk who was grazing the monastery's cattle, and who brought those bones to Cozia Monastery where the abbot buried the bones next to the church. But at night, the Pious showed himself in a dream to the abbot and ordered him to bring back his bones to his cave.

So, the bones of Pious Neophyte reached back to his cave. Then, being that things heard in that area, many believers started coming to that cave and receiving help to their troubles. In time, his bones have been spread

everywhere, so that today have been preserved only the name and the cave of this great Romanian hermit.

All-Pious Father Neophyte, pray to God for us!

PIOUS MELETIUS THE HERMIT
Little-Sheep-Corral Hermitage
(Century XVII) [193]

Pious Meletius was one of the six hermits who left the community of Cozia Monastery. He carved a cave for himself in the southern slope of the Savage Mountain, 1 kilometer far from Little-Sheep-Corral Monastery, and there he lived in ascesis for 40 years, ceaselessly extolling God and keeping his ming clean of evil thoughts. The ascesis of Schemamonk Meletius was the same as that of Hermit Neophyte. He lived in ascesis for six days, in his cave, and on Sundays he went to Pious Daniil the Confessor from Turnu and there he received the Lord's Body.

It was said about him that he was daily bringing water, with his pitcher, from a far distance, in order to get tired. At his old age, he was unable to descend, so that he prayed to God and a strong spring emerged in front of his cave, and that spring has been called, up to these days, as "Meletius's Spring".

Reaching an old age, he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hands of the Lord and he was counted in the group of the pious fathers. His bones were later divided by believers, and his cave have been preserved until today. There go the believers and light up candles.

The life of the hermits is blessed, of them who wing themselves with the godlike longing! (Antiphon, voice no. 5).

SAINT HIERARCH IOREST THE CONFESSOR
Metropolitan of Ardeal
(† 1657) [194]

Saint Hierarch Iorest was a son of peasants from Transylvania. He loved Christs since his youth, so that he became a monk in the community from Putna Monastery, changing his name in Elijah Iorest. Then he followed the spiritual school from that monastery, he reached a skilled monk, a good calligrapher, and a painter of icons. For the cleanness of his heart the abbot made him hieromonk, and Pious Iorest was like a lit-up torch in the community of the fathers, officiating the holy religious services with fear of God and comforting the people with chosen Christian teachings.

[193] Archimandrite Grigorie Urițescu, *Little-Sheep-Corral Monastery*, Bucharest, 1943, pp. 9-12.
[194] Fr. Prof. M. Păcurariu, *Saint Hierarch Elijah Iorest*, in *Romanian Saints*... p. 185.

The news about his spiritual settlement reached to the lord of Moldavia, Basil the Wolf. So, after Metropolitan Ghenadie of Ardeal had died in the autumn of the year 1640, by the will of God, Pious Iorest from Putna was elected father and chief-priest of the Church of Transylvania. After he had received the ordination as hierarch form the Metropolitan of the Romanian Country, the gentle Iorest was enthroned at Alba Iulia as Metropolitan of the Metropolitanate of Ardeal.

For three years as he shepherded the Church of Christ, Saint Hierarch Iorest strived, as a true confessor, to defend the right-Orthodox-faith from the Calvinist teachings and form all the cunning traps of the devil. He appointed priests everywhere, he consecrated churches, and he was visiting the villages comforting and teaching the believers as a good shepherd of the flock of Christ.

In the year 1643, the gentle Hierarch Iorest was thrown into jail for his zeal for the right-faith, and there he endured dishonor, beatings, and rebukes. And the saint was enduring all of those as a martyr, being ready to yield his life for defending the right-faith and for the salvation of his flock. After nine months, the true shepherd was liberated and forced to pay a sum of money. He left for Moldavia and between the years 1656-1657 he was Bishop of Huşi, shepherding well the Church of Christ and working on the salvation of his spiritual sons. Then he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the arms of the Great Hierarch Jesus Christ, being counted din the group of the holy confessors. The Romanian Orthodox Church canonized him in the year 1955 and his remembrance is done on 24th of April.

Saint Hierarch Iorest, pray to God for us!

SAINT EPIPHANIUS FROM VORONEŢ
(Century XVII)[195]

In the community founded by Pious Daniil from Voroneţ, there lived in ascesis many monks with a holy life. Some of them were living in the community, others withdrew themselves into quietude, around the monastery, and others reached to be consummate hermits living in the depths of the forests from under the Rarău Mountains.

During the first half of the Century XVII at the Voroneţ Monastery lived a very improved schemamonk, called Pious Epiphanius. He originated from Suceava area. This loving-of-Christ monk strived in everything to follow the ascesis of his great abbot, Saint Daniil the Hermit. But because the hidden toils of the saints are known only by God, likewise the good deeds of Pious Epiphanius remained unknown to us. The tradition of that area tells us that he was very obedient and gentle, and that he had the gift of the tears and that he was consummate in love. And in the *Paterikon of the Saints from Moldavia-Romania*, p. 14, it is mentioned that he lived around the year 1660,

[195] Fr. Prof. Luviu Stan, *cited work*, pp. 37, 76; Metropolitan Dositheos, *cited work*, pp. 151-152.

"consummately defeating all the groups of the unseen enemies through his deep humbleness". He was also a great teacher of the prayer and a skilled adviser of souls. This was for he was able to see the settlement of each one's heart, and with the name of Christ he was banishing the evil ghosts from within people. For that, many believers were visiting him and he was like an Abraham having many spiritual sons.

So, after he had committed well thew running of his earthly life, and he had been well-pleasant to Christ in everything, he moved, peacefully, to the eternal life, being honored by everybody as a true saint and miracles-worker

Saint All-Pious Father Epiphanius, pray to God for us!

SAINT HIERARCH IOSIF THE NEW FROM PARTOŞ
The Metropolitan of Timişoara
(† 1656)[196]

This holy and bearer-of God hierarch, Iosif the new from Partoş, was born in the year 1568 in the city called Ragusa of Dalmatia, to a family of Christian Vlachs. He was baptized a Jacob. He became an orphan of father at a young age, but his mother provided him with a chosen education, and at the age of 12 he was sent to Ohrid to study.

When he was 15, the young Jacob was called by Christ to the holy monastic ascesis, in the Monastery of the Mother of the Lord from that locality. After five years he went to Mount Athos and entered the congregation of Pantocrator Monastery. There, after harsh spiritual toils, he put on the scheme of the great and angelic image, under the name of Iosif.

At Pantocrator Monastery, Pious Schemamonk Iosif "the Vlach" lived for many years in ascesis, together with other numerous monks" Greeks, Romanians, and Macedonians. There he learnt the craftsmanship of the spiritual fight, the consummate fasting, the taking vigil for the entire night, the obedience, and the humbleness. Then he became a hermit in the forests from around the monastery, where he lived in a deep ascesis, so that he reached the measure of the consummation, being found by God worthy of the gift of the tears and of the sleepless prayer that is worked with the mind within the heart. For the holiness of his life, he also had the gift of working miracles, healing numerous illnesses, especially the lame. For that he was called to many Athonite monasteries, were he was healing the monks of their grave bodily sufferings.

Seeing him overshadowed by the grace of the Holy Ghost, the fathers called Pious Iosif the Vlach in their community and, after he ordained him as priest, they appointed him as confessor over the monks from Mount Athos. And he was so skilled adviser of souls than he reached to be famous and known

[196] *Partoş Monastery,* Timişoara, 1971, pp. 21-34; Fr. Ioan B. Mureşianu, *Monasteries from Banat*, 1976, pp. 104-108; Bishop Timotei of Arad, in *Romanian Saints*, p. 362.

even by the Patriarch of Constantinople. That's why he was later appointed abbot to Saint Stephen Monastery from Adrianople, which he led, with much wisdom, for six years. Then he was appointed abbot to Cutlumuş Monastery from Athos, a renowned foundation of the Voivodes of the Romanian Country, where there were living in ascesis many Romanian and Macedonian monks.

After he raised numerous spiritual sons, he withdrew himself to quietude, in the neighborhood of the Vatopedi Monastery. But, after the Metropolitan of Timişoara had died, the Romanians from Banat, guided by the Holy Ghost, they elected shepherd in his stead Pious Iosif the Vlach, though he was 80 years old, due to the fact that he was famous in all Balkan countries and honored like a saint while he was still living.

In the year 1650 he was ordained as hierarch and enthroned as Metropolitan of Timişoara. Here, the good shepherd proved himself to be a great defender of the Orthodoxy, comforting and advising towards Christ, for the years, the Church of Banat. For he was strong in faith and wise in word, gentle in heart and sleepless in prayer. He worked also some miracles, towards the praise of God and towards alleviating the sufferings of some believers, laying his hands upon their tops of the heads and praying for them. Also, he extinguished, with his prayers, the fire that engulfed Timişoara. For, he came out of the church with the Holy Mysteries in his hands and he prayer with tears, and God immediately sent a strong rain and the fire was put out.

In the year 1653, Saint Hierarch Iosif the new withdrew himself to Partoş Monastery. There he lived for three more years, and in the autumn of the year 1656 he yielded his soul in the hands of the Great Hierarch Jesus Christ, being over 85 years old. The Romanian Orthodox Church canonized him on 7th of October 1956, and his remembrance id done on 15th of September.

Wonderful is God into his subjects, God of our fathers!

SAINT MARTYR JOHN THE VLACH
(The Romanian)
(† 1662)[197]

This blessed offspring of our country was born to a family of pious peasants from Oltenia, during the reigning of Matthew Bassarab. Raised from his childhood into the right-faith, he much loved God, the church, the prayer, and the obedience to his parents.

When he was only 15, the blessed young man John was chosen and strengthened by the grace of the Holy Ghost to ne martyr of Christ, as described in the followings.

In the autumn of the year 1959, a group of Turks had an incursion on Olt Valley, from Ardeal, and they plundered the villages in their route towards Danube River, and they took slaves many innocent young men. Among the

[197] Archimandrite Bartholomeu V. Anania, *Saint Martyr John the Vlach*, in *Romanian Saints*, p. 399.

enslaved ones was also the Blessed John. After crossing the River Danube, the Turks shared among themselves the slaves, at will. The innocent John reached in the possession of an evil and debauched Turkish soldier. In addition to the long and difficult trip, the poor enslaved Christian were forced to endure thirst, beatings, and all sorts of humiliations, and even to be submitted to the unclean lusts of the fornication by their pagan and tyrant masters.

One day Blessed John saw himself forced towards the unclean passion by a Turk, and he refused that with disgust, and he confessed that he was a Christian and he hates the unclean pagan passions. The tyrant got mad and wanted to rape John, but the young Christian strengthened by the zeal of his faith into Christ, he hit and killed the Turk. The other soldiers chained John, and so, after a few months of torments and walking, the Turks reached Constantinople, and the blessed and undefiled John was handed over as slave to the woman of the killed Turk, as punishment, in order him to be her slave until his death. That woman was wounded by the beauty of John, and he drew him towards debauchery and towards the Mahomedan law, forcing him to reject his right-faith into Christ.

Then, the Blessed John, by praying much to God and to the Mother of the Lord to strengthen him in confessing the right-faith and to deliver him from the temptation of the debauchery, he said daringly: "I believe in the true God Who was crucified on the cross for us and I joyfully want to give my life for Christ, than to become a Turk and marry you!". Thus, the confessor John was thrown into prison and they crushed in awful torments. Because he had remained unchanged and strong like a diamond, he was hanged to death and so he yielded his souls in the arms of Christ, in 12th of May 1662, his body being thrown in an unclean place.

METROPOLITAN BARLAAM
Of Moldavia and of Suceava
(1632-1653)[198]

a. His Life

Metropolitan Barlaam Motoc was one of the greatest hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church. He was born in Vrancea Country, in the year 1580, to a family of free peasants who loved Christ very much. He was baptized as Basil. So, being him called to serve the Church of Christ, he received a chosen education, and he entered Neamţ Monastery in his childhood. Then, hearing about the famous Abot Dositheos form Zosima Hermitage, and about the living of the hermits on the Valley of Secu Creek, the young Basil Motoc

[198] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, 1958, pp. 18-24; Fr. Prof. Mircea Păcurarius, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, Sibiu, 1912, pp. 139-147; Vicar Bishop Nestor Severineanul, "An Unknown Manuscript of Confessor Andronicus: The History of the Secu Monastery", in the *M.M. Review*, `1974, no. 3-4, pp. 180-196.

settled down himself there, around the years 1590-1592. For fifteen years he obeyed his teacher in everything, namely Abbot Dositheos, and he learnt from his abbot the love for God and much literacy.

In the year 1606 Abbot Dositheos moved from this life, and in the year 1608 Hieromonk Barlaam was elected as abbot of Secu Monastery. In the autumn of the year 19636 Archimandrite Barlaam was elected, ordained, and enthroned as Metropolitan of Moldavia, in the stead of his forerunner Atanasius, who was dead, and so he shepherded the Church of Christ for 21 years.

Burdened by his old age, in the year 1653 he withdrew to the monastery where he firstly became a monk, and on 19th of December 1657 he moved out of this life, ad he was buried in the monastery's church.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. This chosen vessel of Christ was, from his childhood, overshadowed by the gift of the Holy Ghost and endowed with much wisdom and zeal towards the godlike things. This was for, despite he didn't' have rich and literate parents, he became an enlightened father of Moldavia, teaching everybody the fear of God and the right-Orthodox-faith.

2. While living at Zosimus Hermitage, the young Barlaam surpassed all the other fathers with his gentleness, with his obedience, and with the holiness of his life, to that he was loved and honored as a true monk and spiritual father. It is said about him the he was constantly visiting the great hermits who lived at that time, in ascesis, on the Secu Valley, namely: Moses, Prochor, Beniamin, Spiridon and Chiriac, as also the hermits form the Sihla and Agapia Mountains, learning from each of them the love for God, the Prayer to Jesus, the good-faith, and the committing of all good deeds.

3. The dogmas of the Orthodox faith, the teachings of the Holy Fathers, the deep of the theology, all of those were learnt by Hieromonk Barlaam from his teachers, Abbot Dositheos, and form the Metrophanes Bishop of Roman who firstly became a monk at Secu Monastery. From them he learnt also Greek and Slavonic, and he took approval for translating and copying books in our Romanian language.

4. As abbot of Secu Monastery, Archimandrite Barlaam guides with much spiritual wisdom that community for 24 years, succeeding in raising spiritual sons and in forming on the Secu Valley a real monastic hearth, famous all over Moldavia. Secu Monastery became a hesychastic hearth for prayer, for thinking, and for Orthodox living. Around the years 1625-1630 Secu Monastery was counted among the great monasteries: Neamţ, Putna, Bistriţa, Agapia, Probota, Moldoviţa, and Dragomirna.

5. In his community, Abbot Barlaam observed thoroughly the rules instituted by the Founder, rules which were close to the typicon form Mount Athos. After the religious services in the church. The monks occupied themselves with the fulfillment of their tasks in the community and with the

manual work in their monastic cells. And the reading from the Holy Fathers and the Prayer to Jesus were mandatory to all his spiritual sons.

6. One of the occupations of the great abbot was also to translate the works of the Holy Fathers from Greek and Slavonic in Romanian, so that to be accessible to Romanians too. Thus, Archimandrite Barlaam translated form Slavonic the *Ladder* of Saint John Climacus, as other works too, which were daily read in the church, in the refectory, and in the monastic cells. By that, Abbot Barlaam undertook the first steps in Moldavia for replacing the foreign languages for the language spoken by the people. *The Ladder* of Saint John Climacus was among the first Philokalian works translate din Romanian, and that proves the spiritual preoccupation of our monks for knowing and imitating the holt Fathers.

7. This humble abbot lived such a highly spiritualized life that in a few years he became known everywhere, in monasteries, in villages, in cities, to government clerks, to bishops, and even to the country's lord Miron Barnovski (1626-1629), who had him as confessor. On a daily basis there were running at him peasants, hermits, abbots, and boyars, for advice and for confession of sins, for he was a skilled adviser and searched for by everybody. Also, to his monastic cell were coming poor people and widows from villages, for asking for alms. And he fed them in the refectory with much love, ne parentally comforted them, and he let them free in peace.

8. The same parental care Abbot Barlaam took of the numerous hermits living in ascesis on Neamț Mountains, and especially on the Secu Valley, at Sihla and as The Hermitage. In those places shun great and very spiritualized hermits, as there were Pious: Raphael and Parthenius form Agapia; Pachomius, Serge, John, Bessarion, and Stephan, hermits from the Glade of the Refectory; and especially the famous confessor from *The Valley of the Hermits*. All of those were visited by Father Barlaam, he brought them what they needed, and he asked them for blessing and for useful words.

9. The news of his wisdom attracted to Secu Monastery numerous disciples. Some of them reached to be, later on, skilled monks, good servants of the Church of Christ, confessors searched for by the world, translators of book in Romanian, abbots and founders of monastic communities, and even bishops of the Moldavia's eparchies. Among those can be mentioned: Metropolitan Gideon, firstly Bishop of Huși, between the years 1645-1653, then Metropolitan of Moldavia between the years 1653-1659 and 1664-1671; Metropolitan Sava, former bishop of Huși, Rădăuți, and Roman, between the years 1653-1660, then metropolitan between the years 1660-1664. And among abbots of Abbot Barlaam, we can mention the Hieromonks Ephraem, Gideon, Theodoret, Paisius, Ggehorghe, Ghenadius, and others.

10. For the holiness of his life and for the wisdom which he was endowed by God with, Archimandrite Barlaam, the Abbot of Secu Monastery was elected metropolitan and shepherd of Moldavia, by all the people, in the autumn of the year 1632. On 23rd of September, in the same year, he was ordained hierarch

and placed at the helm of the Church in the presence of several thousands of believers, monks, abbots, and governmental clerks from Iaşi, there being present also the voivode and all the hierarchs. And then was a great joy all over Moldavia, for everybody benefited of his gentleness, humbleness, and full of wisdom words.

11. The first care of the great hierarch was that of feeding his people with religious service books and with books of Christian teaching in Romanian. That's why he founded at Three Hierarchs Monastery, from Iaşi, the first printing press from Moldavia. There Metropolitan Barlaam printed in Romanian three of the most important books of those times, written by him in the honor of the All-Holy Trinity, namely:

The Explanation of the Gospels on Sundays, on Imperial Holidays, and on Celebration Days of the Great Saints Around the Year, printed in the year 1643, under the name *Romanian Book of Teaching*. Popularly, this book was called as *Barlaam's Homiliary*, containing 75 homilies in 500 pages;

Seven Mysteries of the Church, printed at Iaşi, in the year 1644, containing 339 pages;

Answer to the Calvinist Catechism, printed also at Iaşi, in the year 1647.

By these three books Metropolitan Barlaam proved to be, for all Romanian believers, a good knower and exegete of the Holy Scripture, a true teacher of morals, a propound catechizer, and a great hierarch defender of the Romanian Orthodoxy, renown up to our time.

12. The good shepherd of Christ saw that his flock doesn't understand the Church's religious services officiated in foreign languages, so that he strived to translated all the *Gospels* over the year, on the believer's understanding, in a beautiful and clean Romanian language. This was for he didn't think only at the believers from Moldavia, but also to the believers living in The Romanian Country and especially at those living in Transylvania, who were for centuries under foreign occupation and who were constantly pressured to renounce to the Orthodox faith and to the language of their ancestors. Just because of that, the wide hierarch entitled his homiliary as *Romanian Book of Teaching*, for it was addressed to "the entire Romanian people", on the purpose of uniting everyone under the same parental faith and language.

13. The *Homiliary* of Metropolitan Barlaam is the most important old book of spiritual teaching, next to the *Bible* of Şerban dating from the year 1688. Due to its so fluent language and to its giver-of-life teaching, this book was the most widely spread on the land of our country, especially in Transylvania, where there are preserved even today over 350 copies in manuscript. The thirst for Christ, as also the unity of faith, language, and feeling, they determined many believers from Transylvania to copy this book by hand, in order to facilitate its circulation and to made it possible to read at home. The *Homiliary* from Iaşi was for a long time. To Romanians, the first

religion book for reading, for teaching, and for spiritual comforting, on their language sand understanding.

14. The great hierarch heard that in Transylvania was being spread the Calvinism, which was changing the faith's dogmas and which didn't confess the Seven Mysteries, and he understood that some of the Romanians were attracted to Calvinism, he wrote a teaching book entitled *Seven Mysteries of the Church*. By this book Metropolitan Barlaam explained on the people's level of understanding, that the Seven Mysteries are founded by Christ and left to His Church. In the same time, he defended the holiness and the role of the Church and he urged everybody to repentance, well-knowing that the straying from the right-faith and from the good deeds leads to losing the salvation and to the division of the nation.

15. Metropolitan Barlaam went with as peace envoy to The Romanian Country, and he found out that at Alba Iulia was printed in the year 1640 a Calvinist Catechism "full of souly poison", he was lit by a great zeal for defending the Orthodox faith. So, after he turned back to Moldavia, he wrote a book for defending the Orthodoxy entitled *The Answer to the Calvinist Catechism*. Then he summoned at Iaşi, in the year 1645, a synod of Romanian hierarchs from both countries, who approved the *Answer* written by Metropolitan Barlaam, and they also condemned the Calvinist Catechism, declaring it as "full of souly poison". Thus, Metropolitan Barlaam proved to be the first apologist of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the first hierarch summoning a synod on the land of our country.

16. In *The Answer to the Calvinist Catechism* the great hierarch combated with much daring the teachings of the reformer Calvin, replacing them with the dogmas of the Orthodox faith, proving by using the Holy Scriptures that the truth is only in the Orthodox Church founded by Christ. By that, Metropolitan Barlaam proved himself to be a great Orthodox theologian and a good knower of the Protestant teaching, so that he became famous in the Romanian countries and all over the Orthodoxy.

17. This metropolitan was rightly named spiritual father of all Romanians, for he was loved by all of them and he took care, according to his power, of their salvation and union by confessing the same faith into Jesus Christ and by preserving our ancestral being. His three books were written especially for the Romanians from Transylvania, where they were very spread. Metropolitan Barlaam proved himself to be, thus, the first hierarch who fought for the unity of the Romanian Countries and one of the main creators of the Romanian written language.

18. The wise shepherd of Moldavia, at the ask of the Metropolitan Peter Movilă of Kiev, he organized at Iaşi, in the refectory of Three Hierarch Monastery, in the year 1642, a synod of the Greek Russian, and Romanian Churches, in order to approve *The Orthodox Confession of Faith*. For 43 days, the members of the three churches, under the leadership of Metropolitan Barlaam, he discussed, one point at a time, they corrected, and they approved

The Confession of Faith, written by the Moldavia Metropolitan Petru Movilă. Thus, by the care of the good shepherd of Moldavia, there took place, for the first time in history, an inter-Orthodox synod on the land of our country.

19. At the urge of Metropolitan Barlaam, Voivode Basil the Wolf built, at Iaşi, one of the most beautiful churches form the country, the church of the Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery, which Barlaam consecrated, together with many clerics, on 6th of May 1639. In that community were living in ascesis around one hundred monks, who were among the most taught and chosen workers of the prayer, servants, confessors, catechizers, psalms-singers, typographers, and translators of books. There, the great metropolitan founded the firs printing press from Moldavia, as also a famous spiritual school, with the help of Metropolitan Peter Movilă, a school where the classes were held in Greek, Slavonic, and Latin. That school functioned for 20 years.

20. After being paid by the Moldavia's treasury all the debts of the Patriarchy of Constantinople, the Patriarch and the Synod from there bestowed to Moldavia the holy relics of the Pious Parascheva, towards the comforting of the rightly-worshipping people. Her holy relics were brought into the country accompanied by a great procession, accompanied by a big number of clerics, monks, ad tens of thousands of believers who welcome the holy relics holding lit torches in their hands, and they met the procession at the place called "The Valley of the Hierarch", where there were waiting together the voivode and the metropolitan. On the day of 13th of June 1641, they entered Iaşi, accompanied by the ring of the bells and the holy relics were placed, with great honor, in the church of the Three Hierarchs Monastery. Since then, on each year has been undertaken a pilgrimage to the holy relics of Pious Paracheva, on the day of 14th of October.

21. Metropolitan Barlaam urged Voivode Basil the Wolf to build other monasteries and churches too, as: The Newer Agapia Monastery (1644), by the donation of Gavril, who was the chief of the army and the brother of the voivode; Hlincea Monastery from Iaşi; Golia Monastery from Iaşi; the church called Saint John the Baptist from Iaşi; the church called Saint Athanasius of Copou, Iaşi; the church from, Şerbeşti Village – Neamţ; the church called Stelea, of Tîrgovişte; the church called Saint Paracheva from Lvov; and he also gave numerous donations to the other monasteries. All these holy places were consecrated by the good shepherd of Moldavia and he adorned them with monks and with a highly spiritual life.

22. Under the shepherding of this great hierarch, the monasteries from Moldavia lived an epoque of great peace and spiritual flourishing. He appointed everywhere enlightened abbots and good confessors, thus increasing the number of the monks in the community, as also of the hermits living in hermitages and forests.

The monasteries having the highest spiritual life, under Metropolitan Barlaam, were: Three Hierarchs, Putna, Moldoviţa, Voroneţ, Dragomirna, Neam, Secu, Agapia, Probota, Tazlău, and especially Bisericani, the only

monastery from the country observing the rule of around the clock religious services, according to the model of Studios Monastery from Constantinople. In all monasteries functioned true spiritual schools for calligraphers, for translators, for miniaturists, and to icons painters. And the mountains "were teaming with hermits" during his time.

23. Being heard all the way to Constantinople about Metropolitan Barlaam's living and wisdom, as also about the flourishing of the Church from Moldavia under his shepherding, the Synod of the Great Church nominated him, in the year 1639, among the three candidates as ecumenical patriarch, but then was chose Parthenius. It was for the first and the last time that a Romanian hierarch candidate to the throne of the ecumenical patriarch.

24. This venerable spiritual shepherd of Moldavia, he proved himself being, also, a skilled peacemaker, according to the words of our Savior Who says: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called as sons of God" (Mt. 5: 9). Even when he abbot at Secu Monastery, he was sent by Voivode Miron Barnovski and by Metropolitan Athanasius Crimca, as head of the delegation, to the Russian Tzar, and to the Moldavian Metropolitan Peter Movilă from Kiev. In the year 1632 he went again, as head of a peace delegation, to Constantinople, mediating for a Moldavian voivode on the throne.

In the year 1644 he was sent by Voivode Basil the Wolf, as chief of a peace delegation, to Matthew Bassarab Voivode of The Romanian Country, with whim Basil the Wolf had had a conflict for a long time. Thus, the gentle metropolitan succeeded to forever reconcile the two voivodes and the Sirter Orthodox Churches, by bringing in the middle the name of Jesus Christ Who is called as "Lord of the Peace", and by reminding that both are brothers and of the same faith, of the same language, and of the same nation. As reconcilement sign, Metropolitan Barlaam urged Basil the Wolf to build the Stelea Church from Tîrgovişte, and Voivode Matthew Basarab built Soveja Monastery from Vrancea Country, a monastery that was called, for a long time, as "Dobromirna", namely "Good Peace".

25. The care of the great hierarch for the salvation of his flock was equally great as his care for enlightening the "Romanian nation" with books of Christian teaching, in the people's language. During his 21 years of fruitful shepherding, he was striving, according to his power, to build numerous churches in villages and in cities, and to give donations to and to endow hermitages and monasteries. In the three episcopal chairs he appointed bishops among the most pious, and in parishes he ordained literate priests, full of the fear of God. On each day each feat days the priests were reading that day's homily from *Homiliary*, on everybody's understanding. In this way, the monks, the priests, and the hierarchs were defending the right-worshipping, they were teaching the people to live a moral life, and they kept the people tightly united to Christ and to Church.

26. So, Metropolitan Barlaam shepherded the Church of Moldavia for 21 years, sacrificing himself according to his power, for the strengthening and for defending the Orthodox faith in the Romanian Countries, for the salvation of

the flock entrusted to him by Christ, and for the unity and for the enlightenment of the people through books written in clear Romanian language. Then, after reaching an old age, and for desiring to prepare himself for the passing away, in the year 1653 he withdrew himself form the chair to Secu Monastery, where he had firstly become a monk.

27. The old documents are witness that Metropolitan Barlaam had always had a special care for his monastery where he became a monk, and where he was raised and shape spiritually. That "anything he earned, he bestowed it to Secu Monastery". He also bestowed to the community from there a beautiful hierarchal sakkos beautifully ornated with silver thread, he also bestowed cultic books, vessels, and other churchly objects. His sister according to body. Ecaterina, his brother and his nephew, the Priest Bear from Gofeteşti (Cofeteşti?) Village, form Putna Country, they too gave precious donations to Secu Monastery, for the remembrance of the great metropolitan and of their own.

28. In the tradition of the area it is said that Metropolitan Barlaam, as long as he lived as Secu Monastery, he didn't stay without working, but he always prayed, attended the church, read, translated, and wrote building-of-soul books. For he knew many hermits and monks with an improved life, it is said that the metropolitan wrote also a *Paterikon* with numerous lived of pious fathers who were living in the ancestral forests of Moldavia. That *Paterikon* was preserved for a while, in manuscript, in the library of Secu Monastery. Later on, a Hagiorite monk estranged it, by taking it to Mount Athos, where the manuscript was lost.

29. In the autumn of the year 1657, the great hierarch and father of Moldavia, Metropolitan Barlaam, feeling his death near, he shared his whole wealth, he called to himself confessor Dositheos the Abbot of Neamţ Monastery, and he received the All-Clean Mysteries. Then, after kissing everybody good buy, he yielded his soul in the arms of the Great Hierarch Jesus Christ, reconciled with himself, with the Church, and with his nation.

So lived and so strived Metropolitan Barlaam for the salvation of his flock! Lord, count the good shepherd of Moldavia, Barlaam, in the group of Your saints!

PIOUS ATHANASIUS THE HIEROSCHEMAMONK
The Hermitage[199] Monastery
(Century XVII)

In the glade where today is The Hermitage Monastery lived in ascesis, in the first half of the Century XVII, a famous hermit called Hieromonk Athanasius. He became a monk at Neamţ Monastery. After several years of accomplishing his tasks in that community, he withdrew himself total far from

[199] Sihăstria - in Romanian (E. l. t.'s n.).

the world, a few kilometers higher than Secu Monastery, in order him to ceaselessly speak to God. In that epoque the Hermitage Valley, the mountains, and the ancestral forests from around, they formed one of the most famous hesychastic hearth from Moldova.

He made there for himself an earthen and wooden shack, in that glade, where he lives in ascesis for many years, reaching to be a famous confessor to all the hermits from that area and a skilled teacher pf the Prayer to Jesus. The new about his name spread all over the center of Moldova, reaching to be known to Metropolitan Barlaam and even to the country's lord.

Around the year 1650, the great Hermit Athanasius the Hieroschemamonk move to the heavenly dwelling places, leaving behind numerous disciples. The place where he lived in ascesis has been called up to these days as "The Glade of the Hermit" or "Athanasius's Glade". IN that glade his disciples later on founded the Hermitage[200].

HERMITS IOSIF, PARTHENIUS, PAUL, AND OTHERS
With Their Disciples
Founders of Hermitage Monastery
(1655)

Around the middle of the Century XVII there were living in ascesis numerous hermits in the ancestral forests on the Hermitage's Valley and on the Sihla Mountains. Among those, some of them were totally advanced in fasting, in prayer, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost. Their only sadness was the lack of a hermitage in the neighborhood, where they could listen to the Holy Liturgy and to be imparted with the Body and with the Blood of Christ.

In the year 1655, seven old hieroschemamonk who firstly had become monks at Neamț Monastery, and who were disciples of Pious Anasthasius the Hermit who was living in ascesis nearby, they took counsel and decided to found a hermitage made of wood, in "Athanasius's Glade", under the patronage of the Mother of the Lord, towards the comforting of all hermits from that area.

So, they had taken vigil for the whole night and after that they placed the icon of the Mother of the Lord in a fir tree there and, kneeling down in front of that icon, they asked Her for help and blessing for starting the building work. Then they prayer to All-Holy Virgin to be the protector of that holy place and of all hermits who will live there pleasantly-to God, delivering them, with Her fire prayers, of danger, of division, and of all the devil's temptations. Finaly, they made this covenant: "May the Mother of the Lord not to allow there those who will commit bodily sins, or those who will keep their finances or material means for themselves, or those who will dare to eat meat in that hermitage".

[200] Hieromonk Ioanichie Bălan, *Hearths of Hermitage*…, p. 112; The Remembrance List of Hermitage Monastery.

The covenant of the seven hermits was reinforced in the same year by Bishop Gideon of Roman, who erected there a wooden church having the patronage of the Birth of the Mother of the Lord. So was founded Hermitage Monastery, in the middle of that hesychastic hearth, as a true spiritual oasis. The first inhabitants of that hermitage were themselves the seven hesychasts and their disciples. Later on, other loving-of-quietude ones came to live there.

In that hermitage there was lived a consummate community life, observing the rules from the Holy Mountain. On Sundays and on holidays, they took vigil for the whole night and they officiated the Holy Liturgy. On such occasions the hermits gathered together from the entire area, in order they to be imparted with the All-Clean Mysteries. After they had eaten together, they received bread for a week and they went back to their shacks. The consummate hesychasts and the ill ones were descending to the hermitage more rarely. They were visited by the fathers form the community who were bringing to their shacks the Holy Impartation and everything else they needed. And the helpless ones were brought into the community and they were cared with love until their very end. All of them lived in peace, in silence, and in ceaseless prayer.

That was the rule left by the seven Hieroschemamonk and by their disciples, to the hermitage founded by them. After several years of living in ascesis, in humbleness and well-pleasant to God, these blessed hermits moved to the heavenly dwelling places, and they were buried near to the altar of the church founded by them.

SAINT RAPHAIL FROM AGAPIA
(Centuries XVI-XVII)[201]

One of the most honored Romanian saints who shone on the Moldavia's land in the Century XVI, was Pious Raphail form Older Agapia Monastery. He was born in one of the villages from Neamț Country, and hearing about Hermit Euphrosine[202], he left the earthly things and, climbing the mountain, he became that hermit's disciple. So, after being tonsured in monasticism by that hermit, insomuch the Pious Raphail progressed in prayer and in fasting, that he reached the level of his teacher.

After several years of hermit-like life on the Chairs Mountains, he descended to the hermitage founded by Pious Euphrosine. There, advancing even more in his love for Christ, in taking vigils for the whole night, and in prayers with tears, and humbling himself to everybody by his obedience, he was found worthy by God of the gift of the priesthood and of working miracles. This was for he was banishing the unclean ghosts, he knew the people's

[201] Fr. Liviu Stan, *Romanian Saints*, Sibiu, 1945, p. 48; Fr. N. Dărângă, *The History of Agapia Monastery*, 1908, pp. 22-41; *Romanian Saints*..., p. 357.

[202] As I mentioned before, in a similar case, Euphrosine was by and large a feminine name, but on occasions was given also to males too.

thoughts and he saw the future things. He was also an unmatched teacher of the Prayer to Jesus and a spiritual father to all pious hermits. So, after committing his trip in this world angelically, and living behind many disciples, he yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord. Then, after some miracles had been committed at his tomb, the fathers became convinced that God extolled him, so that they unburied his body, whole and full of good fragrance, and they placed it in the church, towards everybody's worshipping.

Hearing about that, the great Dositheos Metropolitan of Moldavia came to the monastery with all his clergy and bowed down before the holy relics of Saint Raphail of Agapia. And in the year 1686, when the *Lives of the Saints* were printed at Iaşi, the metropolitan himself confessed about Saint Raphail, writing: "Also among Romanians many are saints whose life and living I've seen, but they were not visited, except for Daniil from Voroneţ and for Raphail from Agapia, and I have kissed the holy relics of our fathers…"[203].

Later on, because of the harshness of the times, the holy relics of Saint Raphail were buried in a secret place, and they haven't been found again until these days.

Holy All-Pious Father Raphail, pray to God for us!

SAINT PARTHENIUS FROM AGAPIA
(† 1660)[204]

This pious worthy of praise was a disciple of the great hermits living in Agapius's Mountain. Taking the yoke of Christ since his youth, he became a monk at Older Agapia Monastery, at the beginning of the Century XVII. Then, after learning the fear of God and the Prayer of the Heart, he withdrew himself to quietude on Chairs Mountains.

There, toiling much with the fasting and with the of-whole-night prayer and defeating the awful temptations of the enemy devil, he was found worthy by God of receiving the gift of the healing and of banishing away the unclean ghosts. And not a few ill people from villages ran to his monastic cells and they received comforting and health. Then, Agapia Monastery remained without a ruler, so that Pious Parthenius receive the gift of the priesthood and he reached to be a famous abbot of the monks living in that congregation. Thus, he was shepherding all of them with humbleness and wisely, making of himself an example to everybody, both to them living in the hermitage and to those living in the wilderness.

In the year 1660, Pious Parthenius from Agapia moved to the heavenly dwelling places, and his body was buried in *The Fathers' Orchard*. Later on, being honored by the fathers in the group of the pious ones and being worked some miracles at his tomb, they placed his holy relics in the church towards

[203] Metropolitan Dositheos, *cited work*, p. 152.
[204] Fr. Prof. Liviu Stan, *cited work*, p. 54; Metropolitan Dositheos, *cited work*, p. 152.

being worshipped, and even Metropolitan Dositheos kissed those. Then, the Turks invaded Moldova, so that the holy relics of Pious Parthenius were hidden in the mountain and they remained there, unknown by anybody up to today.

Saint All-Pious Father Parthenius, pray to God for us!

SAINT CHIRIAC FROM BISERICANI
(† 1660)[205]

All-Pious our Father Chiriac from Bisericani is counted among the greatest ascetics and pious fathers of our Romanian Orthodox Church. He lived in ascesis at the beginning of the Century XVII, in the community of Bisericani Monastery, which counted back then over 100 monks. So, being him lit up by the godlike longing, he withdrew himself into wilderness, in a cave in Simon's Mountain, and there he lived in the harshest ascesis for 60 years. That ascesis of his was: summer of winter he lived on that mountain, naked, in clean prayer, ceaselessly praising God and consummately defeating, by the gift of Christ, the helplessness of the nature and the devil's temptations.

Metropolitan Dositheos knew this great hesychast while he was still living, and later on the Metropolitan kissed his holy relics, as himself wrote: "I knew in my days highly spiritual and ascetic fathers, and who withdrew to deep humbleness: Father Chiriac from Bisericani, living naked and humble on the mountain for 60 years…".

About this saint in the Paterikon of the Saint from Moldavia it is written: "In the year 1660, All-Pious our Father Chiriac, from a young age embracing the monastic live at the Holy Bisericani Monastery, and by progressing into deep humbleness and into long-suffering and by willingly loving the poverty for Christ, he got totally far form living together with people, and he dwelled on the mountains, and among the most fearsome rocks near to Bistrița River, with hid body naked, and he lived in ascesis, in blizzard, or burnt by the sun, for sixty years, until his death… He is celebrated on 31st of December".

Saint Chiriac from Bisericani reached the level of ascesis of the great hermits of Egypt's Scetis, especially Pious Onuphrius, whose style of life he strived to follow. His naked body was adorned by God with hair from top to bottom, and it was overshadowed by the gift of the Holy Ghost, so that neither the cold nor the hunger, neither the devils harmed him. He was one of the greatest hermits from Carpathian Mountains, who brought to our country an angelical ascesis: the living in total renunciation to himself, in nakedness, and in ceaseless prayer.

Reaching the measure of the consummation, Pious Chiriac yielded his soul in the arms of Christ and he was counted in the group of the Romanian saints, being canonized by people. His holy relics were placed in the cave where

[205] Fr. Prof. Liviu Stan, *cited work*, p. 54; Fr. N. Dărângă, *cited work*, p. 41ș Metropolitan Dositheos*, cited work*, p. 152.

he lived. In that cave in which later on was built, in his honor, a small painted chapel. Later on, because the often disorders from the country, the believers took his holy relics and they shared them among themselves.

Saint All-Pious Father Chiriac, pray to God for us!

SAINT CHIRIAC FROM TAZLĂU
(† 1660)

The greatest hermit living in ascesis nearby Tazlău Monastery, was Pious Chiriac the hermit. This bearer-of Christ man was a son of a family of peasants from that area. He entered the congregation of Tazlău Monastery, ne entered all the other inhabitants from there by his humbleness, by his prayer, and by the holiness of his life. For that, though he hadn't wanted to be given the gift of the priesthood, he became to many their teacher and adviser towards Christ.

He wanted to reach the measure of the consummation and that's why he withdrew himself on the mountain called "Tazlău", and there, together with other hermits, he lived an angelic life in ascesis and being pleasant to God. This pious progressed so much in a short time that he reached the measure of the great hermits. For he was praying ceaselessly for the whole night and with abundantly flowing tears and he was eating only dry bread and forest fruits. For that, from his youth, the gift of the Holy Ghost was resting upon him, and he was found worthy of knowing the future things and of banishing away the unclean ghosts from people.

Seeing himself surrounded by many disciples, Pious Chiriac erected on the mountain, next to his monastic cell, a small altar for prayer, in which he was praying day and night and where he was receiving the confessions of his spiritual sons. This was because both the monks and the laymen were honoring him while he was still alive, as a living saint and as a miracles-worker. This pious contributed much to the development of the hesychasm and of the contemplative life in Moldavia. Around him there was formed a strong hesychastic movement. Tazlău Mountain, Nechitid Mountain, and Tarcău Mountain were full of hermits, disciples of this great teacher of the quietude.

Hus, living angelically and reaching and old age, Saint Chiriac the Hermit yielded his soul in thew arms of Christ, leaving behind many spiritual sons. His holy relics were placed by his disciples in a cave on Tazlău Mountain and many miracles of healing were worked through them. This pious was known, while he was still living, to Metropolitan Dositheos, who kissed his holy relics, as himself confessed: "I got to known during our days fathers who live in a deep ascesis and committing good deeds and who departed for deep humbleness: Father Chiriac from Bisericani and Father Chiriac from Tazlău Mountain". And in *The Paterikon of the Moldavian-Romanian Saints*, published din the year 1888, it is written about this pious: "Also, at the same time, in the year 1660, there was living in ascesis as hermit also All-Pious Father Chiriac,

from Tazlău Hermitage, and who fought much against the unseen enemies and who consummately defeated them, and who is celebrated on 31st of December".

Towards the end of the Century XVII, Moldova was facing big dangers, so that the forests were filled up with refugees, and that's why the holy relics of Saint Chiriac were shared among believers, according to the tradition, in order not to be defiled by pagans. Thus, his cave from the mountain was deprived of such a holy jewelry.

Holy All-Pious Father Chiriac, pray to God for us!

PIOUS ONUPHRIUS THE HERMIT
The Hermitage of Tazlău Monastery
(Century XVII)[206]

The golden era of the hesychastic life around Tazlău-Neamț Monastery culminated in the Century XVII. In that period there were living in ascesis many hermits in the forests from Tazlău Mountains. One of the most famous hermits of Tazlău Monastery, from the Century XVII, was Pious Onuphrius the Hermit. After he had learnt the craftsmanship of the spiritual ascesis, he became the disciple of Saint Chriac from Tazlău, whom he served faithfully until his teacher died. Then, being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, he withdrew himself as hermit, in harsh ascesis, on a mountain peak, above the monastery, called to these days as "Onuphrius's Hill".

There Onuphrius lived in ascesis for 30 years, progressing even more in fasting, in prayer, and in humbleness, so that he reached to be seer with the ghost and miracles-worker. This was because for the holiness of his life he knew the people's thoughts and he was telling them the future things. He was also a skilled spiritual father, having many spiritual sons and disciples, and there was no other more famous than Hermit Onuphrius on Tazlău Mountains. To him came to confess their sins all the hermits from that area, monks form the community and believers from villages, for he was a famous teacher of the Prayer to Jesus, and he was overshadowed by the Gift of the Holy Ghost. There came to him ill people from villages and they were healed by his prayer and blessing.

After living so, Pious Onuphrius left behind many hermits and spiritual sons, and he moved peacefully to the heavenly dwelling places, being counted among the group of the pious fathers[207].

All-Pious Father Onuphrius, pray to God for us!

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[206] Fr. Gh. Vîrtolaș, *The History of Totmu Parish*, manuscript.

[207] In a voivodal chart dating from the year 1617, several hermits from Tazlău Monastery are mentioned, among whom Pious Onuphrius as well.

PIOUS SYLVESTER, PIOUS JOB, AND PIOUS AGATHON
The Hermitage of Tazlău Monastery
(Century XVII)

The hermits Sylvester, Job, and Agathon were disciples of Saint Chiriac from Tazlău. They firstly lived in the monastery, humbling themselves to everybody, and learning form their teacher the fear of God and the gift of the prayer. Then, after their hearts had been wounded by the love for Christ, they withdrew themselves to wilderness in the deep of the mountain, to the place called up to these days as "Tazlău Hill". There had lived numerous hermits ever since Century XIV, for that was a very favorable place to the hermit-like life. One can see traces of monastic cells there up to these days.

On that mountain, Pious Silvester, Pious Job, and Pious Agathon made for themselves monastic cells built in stone and wood, and they lived there in ascesis for more than 30 years, enduring heavy temptations from the devil. This was because they were tormented by cold and by hunger, and by the evil ghosts who fought them by thoughts and by hallucinations. But the good soldiers of Christ endured all of those manly, hoping for the eternal life, for they were armed with the sword of the ceaseless prayer. And when they got weak in their spiritual fight, they called for the help from Saint Chiriac, saying: "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, for the prayer of our Father Chiriac, have mercy on us!", and they were immediately visited by the joy of the Holy Ghost.

These pious fathers, as also the other fathers from Tazlău Mountains, they were descending at night to attend the Matins into monastery, bearing torches in their hands, and after that they climbed again to their monastic cells. At an old age, they were found worthy of the gift of banishing away the unclean ghosts and many visited them or desired even only to touch their vestments.

So, after living well in ascesis and reaching bearers of Christ, Pious Sylvester, Pious Job, and Pious Agathon moved to the eternal life, and they were counted in the group of the pious fathers.

All-Pious Father Onuphrius, pray to God for us!

METROPOLITAN DOSITHEOS
Of Moldavia and Suceava
(1624-1693)[208]

a. His Life

All-taught and worthy of remembrance Metropolitan Dositheos (Barilă) is counted among the most chosen hierarchs ever had by the Romanian Orthodox Church.

This gentle and pious Metropolitan was born in Suceava area, to very believer parents. From a young age he was sent to be schooled by the best teachers existing at that time in Moldavia. Then he went to the school of the Orthodox Brotherhood from Lviv, where he learnt Greek, Latin, Slavonic, and Polish, as also Orthodox theology.

In the year 1649 he was tonsured in monasticism at Probota Monastery. In the year 1658 he was elected Bishop of Huşi, being 34 years old. Between the years 1660 and 1671 he was Bishop of Roman, and between the years 1671 and 1686 he was Metropolitan of Moldavia. In the year 1686 he took refuge in Poland, at Zolkiew. After 7 years lived as refugee, he died there in the year 1693.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. The gentle and humble Metropolitan Dositheos was gifted by God, from his childhood, with much wisdom and godlike zeal. In addition to the teaching gathered from outside form several teachers, he learnt the spiritual teaching in the school of Probota Monastery. Here he learnt the prayer, the obedience, the humbleness, and the zeal towards the heavenly things. Thus, the fathers saw his zeal and they made him a monk in the year 1649.

2. In a short time, Pious Dositheos progressed so much in love and in prayer, that he was found worthy of being spiritual father and confessor and Abbot of the community from Probota. For several years the taught abbot guided the monks towards Christ, strengthening them in the good ascesis and in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Also, he developed much the school of Probota Monastery and he raised many enlightened disciples, bringing in his community a true spiritual flourishment.

3. As Bishop of Huşi and Roman, the gentle shepherd of the flock of Christ appointed everywhere good priests and he renewed numerous churches and monasteries, spiritually building everyone by his humbleness and kindness. There was no priest or abbot more patient, gentler, and more merciful than him in the whole eparchy.

4. Reaching spiritual father ad shepherd of the entire Moldavia, the great Hierarch amazed everybody with his gentleness, with his humbleness, and with

[208] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1957, pp. 74-84; *Metropolitan Dositheos – 350 Years from His Birth*, Metropolitanate of Oltenia Publishing House, Craiova, 1974; Dositheos, *The Book of Psalms in Verses* – edited by Metropolitanate of Moldova and Suceava, Iași, 1974.

his wisdom, as Chronicler Ion Neculce described him: "This Dositheos, Metropolitan, he wasn't a stupid (simple) man himself. And he belonged to the rank of the small boyars, highly educated, he knew many foreign languages: Greek, Latin, Slavonic, and other deep learning and knowledge, full monk and pious and gentle like a lamb. In our country, at this time, there is no other man like him… Voivode Cantemir got angry with this metropolitan and got anathema from patriarchs against the metropolitan. But nothing harmed the Metropolitan, so that the people say about him that he is saint"[209].

5. The first books printed by Metropolitan Dositheos were: *The Book od Psalms in Verses*, and *The Akathists of the Borth Giver of God* (Kyiv – 1673), and they were among the most cherished by Romanians prayer books. He knew that the people loved more the rhythmed prayer than the usual prayer, he versified the *Book of Psalms*, making of it the first Romanian book containing hymns of prayer dedicated to God. Thus, the gentle Metropolitan proved to be the first poet and hymnographer of our nation. The *Book of Psalms* in verses wrote by Metropolitan Dositheos circulated all over the Romanian Countries for hundred years, comforting the hearts of the believers. Some of the believers knew the versified psalms by heart, other were copying them in manuscripts, and others were singing them in houses and churches.

6. The first think Metropolitan Dositheos did was to found a printing press at Iaşi, for printing the books for religious service and for teaching in Romanian, so that the general public to be able to understand them. That printing press printed six books. By those books Metropolitan Dositheos became the founder of the cult in Romanian language from Moldova. He translated for the first time, in Romanian, the *Book for the Liturgy*, *The Book of Psalms*, and *The Octoechos*, the basic books of the Orthodox cult. He renounced to Grek and Slavonic reckoned in the past as sacred, in order to make the religious services possible to understand by the believers.

7. This pious Moldavian hierarch translated and printed, also, for the first time in Romanian, another book cherished by Romanians: *The Lives of the Saints for the Whole Year* (1682-1686). Printed din four volumes, in a shortened form, this hagiographical work contains also the lives of some Romanian saints who lived in the monasteries from Moldavia, some of whom he knew personally and he kissed their holy relics, as himself confessed: "But also among the Romanians there are many whose live and living I've seen, but they weren't searched for, except Daniil from Voroneţ and Raphail from Agapia; I've kissed their holy relics".

Thus, Metropolitan Dositheos was the first Romanian hagiographer, who toiled to feed the souls of the believers with books of praises to God and with lives of saints.

8. During his shepherding the spiritual life in monasteries was quite heigh, and the forests and the hermitages were full of hermits. Himself Metropolitan Dositheos, famous ascetic and worker of the prayer, he was

[209] Ion Neculce, *The Chronicle of Moldavia*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1973, p. 89.

visiting the monasteries and the hermitages from his eparchy and he was visiting the fathers from wilderness, benefiting of the humbleness, of the patience, and of the holiness of their life. He also was kissing with piousness their honored faces, and he was sending the necessary things to the monastic cells where they were living in ascesis. Himself said about that: "I have known in our days highly improved and living in deep ascesis fathers, and bowed down in deep humbleness"[210].

9. The most precious jewelry of Moldavia, very cherished by Metropolitan Dositheos, were the holy relics of Saint John the New, from Suceava. He moved those holy relics to in the cathedral from Iaşi, and he guarded them with great holiness and in time of danger he took them all over the country officiating litanies, and many miracles were worked and many signs were made, towards the comforting of the rightly-believing people. Between the years 1686-1687 there was a big disturbance and upheaval in the country, so that the Metropolitan took the coffin with the holy relics in Poland, to Zolkiew.

10. There, in a foreign country, Pious Dositheos sat together with his disciples, for seven years, guarding the holy relics, and praying day and night, hoping for returning to the ancestral land, And there were many people coming to the holy relics of the Saint Martyr John and not few were healed and benefited of the advice of the gentle hierarch, And he also wrote useful books and he committed many good deeds.

Toiling so, this great shepherd, hagiographer, and hymnographer of the Romanian Orthodox Church, at the end of the year 1693 he peacefully passed away, far from his country, yielding his soul in the hands of the Great Hierarch Jesus Christ.

PIOUS LAZARUS THE HERMIT
The Putna Hermitage
(Century XVII – the beginning of the Century XVIII)

This pious originated form Transylvania. In his youth he was a disciple and obedient to the gentle Metropolitan Dositheos, who tonsured him in monasticism and ordained him priest. When the metropolitan went to exile in Poland (1686), his disciple Hieromonk Lazarus became a hermit at Putna Hermitage. He found the hermitage and the church from there derelict and deserted, so he made for himself a wooden monastic cell there, and he was living there in ascesis, in fasting and in prayer, ceaselessly praising God.

In a few years he gathered few loving-of-quietude hermits around himself, but they didn't have a church where to bring the bloodless sacrifices in. So, Abbot Lazarus heard that treasurer Elijah Cantacuzino, from Iaşi was a merciful man, he asked him to renew the hermitage's church, and that one done that joyfully. Around the church having the patronage of the Good

[210] Dositheos, Metropolitan of Moldavia, *The Lives of the saints*, Iași, 1686, vol. IV. P. 152.

Annunciation, the few hermits made for themselves wooden monastic cells and they were living there in consummate love, under the guidance of Abbot Lazarus, praying day and night for the salvation of the people and enduring not few shortcomings and temptations from the devil.

After a spiritual ascesis for over 20 years, Pious Lazarus yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord, around the year 1710, leaving behind a few hermits advanced in good deeds[211].

PIOUS CASIANA THE SCHEMA-NUN
Casiana Hermitage – Ceahlău
(Century XVII)[212]

This schema-nun became a nun at Topoliţa-Tîrgu Neamţ Monastery. He withdrew herself, together with a few female-disciples, on the Bistriţa Valley, firstly in the forests of Hangu. In time, after several nuns had gathered together around her, Schema-Nun Casiana founded a small wooden hermitage on Buhalniţa Creek Valley, called Casiana Hermitage, which was guided by her until her death. The ascesis of the nuns from that hermitage was the same as in all hermitages from around Ceahlău Mountain. They were daily singing the even praises, in their monastic cells they were reading the *Book of Psalms*, they were eating once a day, and they lived permanently in watchfulness and in humbleness. The name of this schema-nun was known in all villages from Bistriţa Valley, for she was a famous nun and prayer for everybody, and everybody benefited of her ascesis.

Around the middle of the Century XVII, Pious Casiana moved to the resting into Christ, leaving behind her numerous female-disciples.

PIOUS SCHEMA-NUN SOPHIA
Sophia Hermitage – Ceahlău
(Century XVII)

Shema-Nun Sophia was spiritually raised in the community of Topoliţa Monastery – Tîrgu Neamţ. Then she withdrew herself on the Valley of Bistriţa River, where she lived for many years in ascesis, together with her female-disciples, on the Eastern side of Mount Ceahlău, above Răpciune Village.

Seeing herself surrounded by many female-disciples, she was urged by God to found a hermitage for nuns. There were many nuns living in ascesis on the forests from under Ceahlău Mountain, but they had no monastery where to

[211] Abbo Sila, *The History of the Putna Hermitage from the century XVIII*, printed by Teodor Blan at Chernovtsy, 1936; the archive and *The Remembrance List of Putna Monastery*.
[212] Fr. C. Matasă, *The Guidebook of Neamţ Monastery*, Bucharest, 1929, pp. 99-104; *Ibid*., *The Palace of the Voivodes*, Bucharest, 1935, p. 39.

extoll Christ. Thus, Pious Sophia built there a small wooden church having the patronage of Saint John the Theologian. She also made monastic cells around that church and she gathered there over 20 nuns, and she established the tule for living in ascesis.

That holy place was called Sophia Hermitage and lasted on Ceahlău for almost two centuries. Schema-Nun Sophia was spiritual mother in that hermitage for over 30 years, raising many chosen nuns. Some of them withdrew themselves, in time, into wilderness, and there they were sacrificing themselves, to their death, in fasting and in prayer. Others lived in ascesis in wilderness only during the holy fasting periods, and after that they descended again to the hermitage.

This pious nun was honored all over that area for the holiness of her life, both by laypeople and by monks, for she was overshadowed by the gift of God and she was full of spiritual wisdom. Towards the end of the century XVII, Schema-Nun Sophia moved peacefully to the heavenly dwelling places, leaving behind a famous hermitage of nuns. At the beginning of the century XIX, the Sophia Hermitage remained almost deserted, so that the wooden church from there was moved to Durău Monastery[213].

PIOUS SCHEMA-NUN MELANIA
Durău Hermitage – Ceahlău
(Century XVII)

In addition to the Casiana and Sophia Hermitages, there was also, at west of Mount Ceahlău, another hermitage of nuns called Melania Hermitage or Durău Hermitage, after the name of the creek flowing form that mountain. That hermitage was founded during the first half of Century XVII by Pious Schema-Nun Melania, who lived in ascesis for many years in that place.

The tradition says that Melania, baptized Mariana, was a daughter of a noble family from Iaşi. She wanted to become bride of Christ so that she secretly left her parental house accompanied by two of her female servants and they hid themselves, alone, under the peak of Mount Ceahlău, above today's Durău Monastery. There, the Blessed Melania became Schema-Monk and she lived there in ascesis, as hermits, together with her female-disciples, unknown to anyone. Then, for other few nuns gathered there, they founded a small hermitage and they built a small wooden church, having the patronage of the Goof Annunciation, and called as Melania Hermitage.

That hermitage had the harshest ascesis adopted by nuns on Ceahlău Mountain. Around Abbo Melania gathered there around 30 nuns from other hermitages and monasteries, forming a famous hesychastic settlement of women, in Moldavia. Some of them were living in ascesis within community, others were living alone in small wooden shacks around the hermitage. They

[213] Fr. C. Matasă, *The Guidebook of Neamț Country*, pp. 104-105.

had in common only the church. Until these days have been preserved there two names form the pious praying nuns from Ceahlău of yore: *The Nuns' Foot* and *The Nuns' Spring*.

Schema-Nun Melania was a famous spiritual mother on Ceahlău Mountain, and she was also a worker of the Prayer to Jesus. She raised many female-disciples in the love for Christ, comforting them in time of temptations and advising them on the path to salvation. Then, reaching the measure of the great hermits, she kissed good bye her females-disciples and she passed away peacefully[214].

"The hermits' life is blessed, of those who wing themselves up with thew godlike longing!" (Antiphon, voice V).

[214] After Pious Melania passed away, her hermitage was called Durău Hermitage. Between the years 1779-1780 Abbot Paisius gathered there all the nuns and the nuns-hermits from that area, under the leadership of Abbot Nazaria and Pious Josif the Hermit. In the year 1830 Durău Hermitage became a monastery of monks.

Pious Fathers from Centuries XVII-XVIII

PIOUS BARSANUPHIUS THE HERMIT
Abbot of Sihăstria Hermitage
(Centuries XVII-XVIII)[215]

This pious abbot guided the community of Sihăstria Hermitage – Neam, towards the end of the Century XVII and around the beginning of the century XVIII. He had a highly spiritual life and she was honored both by the fathers living inside the hermitage and by the hermits from that area. He was abbot and spiritual father to all of them.

Abbot Barsanuphius received Blessed Nun Theodora in the hermitage, and he entrusted her to Hieroschemamonk Paul, to settle her in wilderness in the forests from Sihla. The same abbot rested in his community the hermits living in the forest, who he was giving the Body and the Blood of the Lord, as also the means they needed. On some other occasions, he was visiting them at their shacks and he was sending brothers form the hermitage to take care of the ill ones and to bring them food.

At the beginning of the Century XVIII, the name of Pious Theodora from Sihla was completely forgotten, but Pious Barsanuphius was the only one chosen by God to discover the cave which she lived in. Seeing the birds taking bread crumbles form refectory and flying towards Sihla Mountain, he sent two brothers to follow the birds, until they found the pleasant-to God Pious Theodora. Then he immediately appointed a confessor to impart her. After she had died, they buried her in the cave where she lived. Under the guidance of this blessed abbot, Sihăstria Hermitage experience the most flourishing spiritual life form its history, being counted among the great hermitages from Moldavia, as there were: Pocrov, Vorona, The Older Agapia, Rarău, Ceahlău, and others. At the beginning of the Century XVIII, Sihăstria Hermitage counted over 30 hermits. All of them were living consummate community life, in fasting, in silence, in obedience, and in ceaseless prayer.

So, by being well-pleasant to God and raising many disciples, Pious Barsanuphius passed away peacefully, and he was buried next to the church.

PIOUS PAUL THE HERMIT
The Confessor of Saint Theodora from Sihla
(The Second Half of the Century XVII)[216]

This wonderful and holy father was secret confessor of Pious Theodora from Sihla. He lives in ascesis, in the first place, in the community of Sihăstria Hermitage, during the second half of the Century XVII, and he was an adviser and a souly father to all the monks from there. Then Blessed Theodora arrived to that hermitage and she wanted to life a hermit-=like life, so that Pious Paul

[215] Hieromonk Ioanichie Bălan, *Hearths of Hermitage*, p. 22.
[216] *Hermitages Hearts*.

took her, on Sihla Mountain, and he placed her in an abandoned shack. There the old man was imparted her, secretly, with the Body and with the Blood of Christ, and he was bringing her dry bread for food.

Later on, aspiring to the life of the great fathers, Hieroschemamonk Paul withdrew himself to wilderness, in the ancestral forests situated between Sihla and Rîpa Coroi. There is a secret and blessed by God place, where lived in ascesis the greatest hermits from Sihla Mountains. And nobody, except those chosen by the Holy Ghost, was able to see those pious, neither to find their shacks.

In that place suitable for hermit-like living, Pious Paul lived in ascesis for more than ten years, in unknown toils and spiritual joys. Around him there were living in ascesis tens of loving-of Christ hermits, and all of them had Paul as their spiritual father, for he was full of the gift of the Holy Ghost, wise, and foreseer. Then, being well-pleasant to God and reaching the measure of the fathers from yore, he yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord, while praying on a rock. For two centuries his bones were lying there, unfound by anybody. In the summer of the year 1930, on 2oth of July, his holy relics had been discovered by a loving-of Christ hieromonk, called Christophorus, who became a monk at Frăsinei Monastery, who was living in quietude in the forests around Sihla Hermitage. That monk was coming back from the hermitage and he fell asleep, for a little while, on his way back, and Pious Paul showed himself in that hieromonk's dream, dressed up in a baize coat, wearing a white beard and long hair, and having his face enlightened. Then, with a gentle voice, he told to Paul:

- Father Christophorus, take it to the right for a hundred paces, and you will find there, under the rock, next to the trunk of that fir tree, my unburied body, of the humble Hieroschemamonk Paul, who lived yore in ascesis in these forests. Bury my bones there, and take my skull and keep it with you, as blessing, for the whole your coming life!

Then the pious disappeared, and Hiero-deacon Christophorus found his honored relics in the shown place, under a spider web. Those bones were yellow and they were spreading a good fragrance. So, kissing those bones and saying prayers, he buried them there, and he took the skull of the saint with him to his monastic cell. Later on, he descended carrying that precious jewelry to Sihla Monastery. He was carrying that skull in a bag marked with the sign of the cross. So, he told to the abbot that secret, he placed that skull in the alter on the Holy Table and he served the Holy Liturgy for three days. Then, after all the congregation kissed that holy skull of Pious Paul, Hiero-deacon Christophorus went back into wilderness and nobody has seen him since then.

How wonderful is God into His saints, God of our fathers!

SAINT THEODORA FROM SIHLA
(Centuries XVII-XVIII)[217]

a. Her Life

Pious Theodora form Sihla it is the most chosen holy nun sprouted out by the Romanian monasteries. She was born in Vînători-Neamţ Village, in the first half of the century XVII. Her father, Stephen Joldea, was warden or prison and policeman of Neamţu Stronghold. After the death of her sister Maghiţa (Margioliţa?), Theodora was married to a young man from Ismail. But because of not having children, both she and her husband went to monastery. Blessed Theodora put on the monastic vestments at Vărzăreşti Hermitage – Rîmnicul Sărat, and her husband Eleftherios became a monk at Poiana Mărului Hermitage. Because of being the hermitage destroyed by Turks, Theodora became a hermit in the Buzău Mountains. Then he withdrew herself in the Neamţ Country where she lived alone, as hermit, for 30 years, in a cave from Sihla Mountain, resembling herself to Pious Mary the Egyptian. So, being well-pleasant to God, she passed away from this life during the first decades of Century XVIII and she was buried in that cave.

During the first decades of the Century XIX the holy relics of Pious Theodora from Sihla were taken by the Family of Sturza Boyars, founder of that hermitage, and brought to the church built by them in the Miclăuşeni Village – Iaşi. In the year 1867 her holy relics were given to Pecerska Monastery from Kiev, where they have been preserved until today, in exchange for several sets of vestments embroidered with precious metal threads.

b. Deed and Useful Words

1. This blessed offspring of the Romanian monasticism was from her childhood chosen and planted in the house of God. For, while being married to a man, Blessed Theodora hadn't found resting to her soul until she became bride to Christ. Thus, because of not having children, she left the passing things and she put on the coat of the repentance, in the Vărzăreşti Hermitage – Buzău Country.

2. Here Blessed Theodora progressed so much, in silence, in prayer, and in obedience, that in a few years she reached the measure of the ones from old, being found worthy of praying form her heart and of knowing the multitude of the temptations form the enemy. For that all the nuns from there were loving her and they benefited of her humbleness, of her ascesis, and of her zeal.

3. The Turks had invaded the Buzău Valley and destroyed the hermitage where Theodora lived, so that she hid herself fin the mountains with her spiritual mother Schema-Nun Paisia. There they lived in fasting and in vigil for a few years, manly enduring the hunger, the cold, and other untold

[217] *The Life and the Living of Pious Theodora from Sihla* manuscript dating from the beginning of the Century XIX, in the possession of Fărcăşanu Family from Tîrgu Neamţ; Fr. Liviu Stan, *Romanian Saints*, Sibiu, 1945, p. 76; Fr. Prof. C. Galeriu, *Pious Theodora from Sihla*, in *Romanian Saints*, p. 432.

temptations form the devil. This was for, by arming herself with the fiery prayer of the heart, Blessed Theodora endured all of those and she was shared with the secret comforting of the Holy Ghost.

4. After her spiritual mother had died there in the mountain, around the years 1670-1675, Pious Theodora was guided by God towards the Neamț Mountains, in her motherland. There, after she bowed down in front of the miracle-working icon of the Mother of the Lord from the great monastery, she was sent to take advice form the monastery's Abot Hieroschemamonk Barsanuphius. The abbot understood that's he wanted a hermit-like life, and he knew by the Ghost her virtue, he imparted her with the Body and with the Blood of Christ, and then he gave her Confessor Paul as guide, and he told her:

- Go into wilderness for a year, in the forests form Sihla Mountain. If you are able to endure, by the gift of Christ, the awful temptations of the wilderness, you will stay there until your death. And if you are unable to endure those, you will withdraw yourself to a monastery of nuns and you will work, in humbleness, for the salvation of your soul.

5. While she and Pious Paul was searching for a monastic cell abandoned by a previous hermit, and because of not being him able to find any, they met an old hermit who was living in ascesis under the Sihla's rocks. That one, being seer in the ghost, he told to them:

- Live in ascesis, Mother Theodora, in this monastic cell of mine, for I am moving to another monastic cell. So, Hieroschemamonk Pauol moved Pious Theodora there and, after blessing her, he turned back to the hermitage.

6. In that monastic cell Pious Theodora lived in ascesis for almost 30 years, ceaselessly extolling God and being victorious by patience, by prayer, and by humbleness, upon all the enemy's traps. This was for, by being her strengthened with power from above, she didn't descend from the mountain, neither she received any human help from anyone. Only Blessed Paul, her confessor, was climbing, from time to time, at her monastic cell bringing the All-Clean Mysteries and the things she needed for her earthly life. Pious Theodora had progressed so much in this angelic ascesis that she was taking vigil for the whole night with her hands raised towards heavens, until dawn and her face was enlightened with light form above, and then she rested for two hours and started again. She ate only once in two days, a few dry bread and forest herbs, fern and sorrel called "Saint Theodora's sorrel". And she was drinking rain water that was gathering in a hole of a rock that ahs been called up to today as "The Fountain of Saint Theodora". And, a true miracle, the water never dried in that fountain.

Later on, Pious Paul had died, so that Blessed Theodora remained only into the care of God.

7. Once the Turks invaded the villages and the monasteries form Neamț County, and the forests became full of villagers and monks. On that occasion a few nuns reached at the monastic cell of Pious Theodora. The Blessed Theodora told to them:

- You can stay in my monastic cell, for I have another shelter. Since then, she went to a small cave from nearby, and there she lived in ascesis, unknown to anyone, and at night she was resting herself for a while on the stone slab that can be seen today in the far side of the cave.

8. Once, a group of Turks wandered on the Sihla Mountain and, by the work of satan, they found the cave of Pious Theodora. So, they rushed upon her and wanted to kill her, but the saint fell into her knees and raising her hands towards heavens she shouted out:

- Deliver me, Lord, from the hands of the killers! On that moment the wall of the cave from the far side miraculously opened, and the bride of Christ crossed through there and hid herself in the forest, so that she was delivered form death.

9. Being totally forgotten by people and having nobody at an old age, she totally entrusted herself to God. Thus, leaving her monastic cell, Saint Theodora lived in a cave like an angel into body. She neither felt the cold nor she felt the hunger, neither the devil was tormenting her anymore. But she was ceaselessly praying to God with her hands raise towards heavens, until her mind was being kidnapped to the heavenly realities, and her body was hovering above the ground. Then her face was enlightened by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and through her mouth her prayer was going up as a fire flame, like in the case of the great saints. This was for Blesse Theodora reached the highest prayer, the ecstasy, and she was being sweetened, in an untold manner with the godlike realities.

10. The vestments of Saint Theodora became some rags hardly covering her body that was weakened by the harsh ascesis. She no longer had any good, so that the birds of the sky, at the command of the Creator, were daily bringing her breadcrumbs and pieces of bread crusts from the refectory of Hihăstria Hermitage. And Blessed Theodora was praying ceaselessly for the world and she was rejoicing of the closeness of her moving away form body. But for 40 days before her death, she prayed to God to send her a priest who to bring her the All-Clean Mysteries. And the Lord didn't overlook the desire of her soul.

11. Once, the abbot of Hihăstria Hermitage, Barsanuphius noticed flock of birds taking in their beaks breadcrumbs towards Sihla Mountain. So, thinking that there could be a holy hermit living, he sent two brothers to see where those birds were going to. But the night came and they got strayed into forest, so that they stopped walking and were praying and waiting for the dawn to come. Then, they noticed in front of them a ray of light raising towards the sky, and when they got closer, they saw a woman having her face enlightened and praying with her hands raised upwards. That was Saitn Theodora.

- Thank You, Lord, for You have heard me! Said Blessed Theodora.

Then she added:

- Do not fear, brothers, for I am a humble servant of Christ. But first, please throw me a coat so that I will put it on. For I am naked.

After that, she called them and told to them the story of her life; and then she told them about the near end of her life, and she commanded them, saying:

- Go down to the hermitage and tell to abbot to send Confessor Antonius and Hieroschemamonk Laurentius to me, with the Body and the Blood of Christ.

- But how can we o to the hermitage, the brothers answered to her, for we do not know the path?

- Follow the light that you see in front of you and you will immediately reach there.

12. The next morning Confessor Antonius came to Sihla with the deacon and with the two brothers, and they found Saint Theodora at prayer, in fir tree branches, before her cave. So, firstly, the Pious confessed the secret of her life and she received absolution of sins form the confessor. Then she uttered the Creed, she received the godlike Mysteries and, after asking from blessing from the priest. She said:

- Glory to You, Lord, for everything! And on that very moment Saint Theodora yielded her blessed soul in the arms of Christ, and she bearer-of-good-fragrance body was buried, after the burial service, with honor, by the fathers, in the cave where she lived in ascesis.

13. The news about the life and the departure of Saint Theodora from Sihla spread quickly in all monasteries and villages from Moldavia, and even beyond Moldavia's borders. That's why her holy relics form the cave were visited by monks and by believers from villages, especially by the ill ones, and they were healed of their suffering. This was because her body extolled with the incorruptibility was springing good fragrance and was working miracles: some of those were kissing g her holy relics, others were touching her coffin with their ill people, and others were washing themselves with water taken form the fountain used by her and they received help and comforting.

14. The holy body of Pious Theodora from Sihla remained in that cave for a hundred years, enjoying a profound veneration, more than any other Romanian saints. Since her death and up to today, thousands of believers have been going in pilgrimage to Sihla Hermitage and ask for her help.

Around the years 1830-1835, the holy relics of Saint Theodora entered the possession of Sturza Family, who placed them in a silver coffin and brought them to the church they built in Miclăuşeni Village – Iaşi. And in the year 1856 her holy relics were bestowed to Pecerska Monastery – Kiev, and placed in the catacombs of that monastery, where they are today, under the name *Saint Theodora from Carpathian Mountains*. Her soul, though, ceaselessly prays in front of the All-Holy Trinity for us and for the whole world.

Saint All-Pious Mother Theodora, pray to God for us!

SAINT ELEFTHERIOS THE HERMIT
Sihla Hermitage[218]
(Centuries XVII-XVIII)

Hermit Eleftherios originated from Ismail. In his youth he was the husband of Pious Theodora from Sihla, whom he lived with in lawful marriage for a few years. Then, for his wife went to become a nun at Vărzăreşti Monastery, and from there she withdrew herself into wilderness on Buzău Mountains, he too became a monk at Poiana Mărului Monastery. There, after learning well the craftsmanship of the spiritual ascesis form the great hesychasts living in that monastery, Pious Eleftherios was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood and he was serving day and night to the church.

Later on, understanding that Blessed Theodora withdrew herself into wilderness on Neamţ Mountains, Hieroschemamonk Eleftherios was urged by God to follow her traces. So, reaching him at Hihătria Hermitage, and wandering to the hermits living in ascesis on Sihla Mountain, he found the cave of Pious Theodora who departed, long time ago, to her beloved Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

Thus, much sighing the Blessed Eleftherios after his wife, he didn't turn himself back to the monastery where he became a monk, but he built for himself a small monastic cell under the rocks of Sihla, near to the cave of Pious Theodora, and he reached to be a famous hermit in that area. He was taking vigil day and night, in fasting, and with hot tears, officiating the godlike Liturgy and waiting for his untying from the body's ties.

So, he lived in ascesis in that wilderness for around ten years and being well-pleasant to God, and he passed away somewhen during the first decades of the Century XVIII. He was buried in the cemetery of the hermits from that glade. After a few years, the Family of the Cantacuzino Boyars built a hermitage upon the tomb of Pious Eleftherios, in the honor of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist.

So was founded Sihla Hermitage, in the year 1741.

BISHOP METROPHANES OF BUZĂU
(† 1702)[219]

The taught Bishop Metrophanes originated from Neam Country, and he became a monk at Bisericani Monastery, a famous hearth of spiritual living and culture from Moldavia. After he learnt Greek and Slavonic from the monastery's teachers, as also the deep of the Holy Scripture, Monk Metrophanes had been found worthy of the gift of the priesthood and he became a close disciple and typographer of the great Metropolitan Dositheos.

[218] *The Remembrance List of the Hermitage* and he local tradition.
[219] *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1958, pp. 113-114.

Between the years 1673-1683, Hieroschemamonk Metrophanes lead the printing press of Metropolitan Dositheos, at Saint Three Hierarchs Monasteries from Iaşi, much contributing to the translation and to the printing in Romanian of the books for religious service, among which there was also *The Lives of the Saints* (1682-1686).

Due to his wisdom and spiritual settlement which God endowed him with, Hieromonk Metrophanes was elected and ordained Metropolitan of Huşi, in the year 1683, by the gentle Metropolitan of Moldavia. For four years as he shepherded the flock of Christ at Huşi, he proved to be very gentle, wise, loving of people, and fulfiller of the godlike commandments. Then, after Metropolitan Dositheos had been sent in exile, he too left his chair and reached to be the chief of the metropolitan printing press from Bucharest. In this position, Bishop Metrophanes staid for almost five years, being a skilled typographer of The Romanian Country, and educating numerous typographer craftsmen, among whom also the taught Metropolitan Antim Ivireanu. Also, he contributed to the translation of the *Bible* printed in the year 1688, and especially to its printing that was totally entrusted to him.

In the year 1961, Bishop Metrophanes was appointed to the vacant chair of Buzău, an eparchy which she shepherded for 11 years with much zeal and fear of God. In addition to the care for the church and for the entrusted to him flock, the taught hierarch founded at Buzău a new printing press where he printed numerous books for religious service, as: *The Menaion* for the entire year (1696), *Euchologion* (1699), *Triodon* (1700), *Octoichon* (1700), *Pentecostarion* (1701), and *The Liturgy Book* (1702).

Toiling thus, Bishop Metrophanes, for the praise of the Church of Christ and fore the salvation of His flock, in the summer of the year 1702 he moved, peacefully, to the heavenly dwelling places, leaving behind numerous disciples.

PIOUS SIMEON THE HERMIT AND HIS DISCIPLES
Sihăstria Hermitage – Ceahlău
(† 1704)

One of the oldest monastic settlements on the Bistriţa Valley was Sihăstria – Ceahlău, a hermitage situated near to the mountain top, founded, according to the tradition, by the first dismounted – Voivode Dragoş. In this wooden hermitage, having the patronage of the Transfiguration of the Lord, there lived in ascesis, for hundreds of years, the most chose hermits of Ceahlău, whose names are written in the book of life.

Between the years 1650-1704, there lived in that small hermitage a pious monk famous among the hermits from Ceahlău, called Hieroschemamonk Simeon. This one was, in the beginning, a hermit living under the top of the mountain, enduring there many temptations for his love for Christ, and

reaching a famous worker of the Prayer to Jesus. Then, he was elected by monks as abbot of the Sihăstria Hermitage – Ceahlău, which he guided with spiritual wisdom for more than 30 years.

Pious Simeon renewed the wooden church and he gathered around himself 20 disciples. The rule of the hermitage was this: on each day were song the 7 praises, they officiated the Matins at midnight, and on feast days they officiated the Holy Liturgy, when there were coming also the other hermits living on Buzău Mountain. They received the confession of sins and they were imparted weekly, and they served one meal a day. In periods of fasting, the monks withdrew to their shacks on the mountain, where they were living alone in ascesis, according to the will of God, until the great feasts were coming. Then they descended again to the hermitage. The monks loved silence the most, the humble cogitation, the fasting, and the ceaseless prayer. The soul of that hermitage was, of course, Pious Simeon, a famous teacher of the prayer and a spiritual father to everybody. Above all, he was teaching his disciples to love on one another and to pray for the salvation of the souls of the people.

Thus, living Pious Simeon in ascesis, with his disciples, and reaching the age of 90, God appointed to him an end like this: in the spring of the year 1704, right on the Resurrection night, whole all the fathers were in the church, there took place an avalanche of snow upon the hermitage. Then, one of the monks shouted out:

- Bothers, let's quickly take with us the Icon of the Mother of the Lord and let's run on the other side of the valley, because the mount is coming upon us!

The others thought that that brother was hallucinating, and they didn't listen to him. Then, the humble hermit took the Icon of the Mother of the Lord and ran away with it. The avalanche immediately covered the hermitage, the church, and the fathers from there, one moment after Pious Simeon had read the Gospel of the Holy Easter, and all of them yielded their ghost in the hands of God Who resurrected Himself from dead.

So moved Pious Simeon away from this life with the entire his community, in the light of Christ. Only that monk escaped with his life, and he saved the Icon of the Mother of the lord form destruction. The next day the abbot was extracted form under the snow, dead, holding the *Book of the Gospels* at his chest, and having all his disciples around him[220].

Lord, count Pious Simeon and his disciples in the group of the saints!

[220] Fr. C. Matasă, *cited work*, pp. 90-106, and the local tradition.

PIOUS PATAPIOS AND PIOUS NICANDRU
Hermits on Ceahlău Mountain
(Centuries XVII-XVIII)

These two hermits lived in ascesis on the northern side of Ceahlău Mountain, reaching famous in the villages from Bistriţa Valley. Schemamonk Patapius became a monk at Cerebuc Monastery, and Hieroschemamonk Nicandru became a monk at Peon Monastery.

So, for they aspired to become like the blessed hermits who were living in ascesis around that mountain and being them strengthened by the gift of Christ, they withdrew themselves in the impenetrable forests from around Ceahlău Mountain. Pious Patapios made for himself as small wooden shack on the bank of a creek and there he lived in ascesis, together with his disciple, for over 20 years, praising God, day and night. His ascesis was very harsh: long periods of fasting, daily reading the *Book of Psalms*, and prostrations, night vigil. For the humbleness of his heart, he reached to be a famous prayer-worker for the suffering people, among whom not a few were healed by his prayers.

Pious Nicandru had his monastic cell in a small glade, a little higher than Durău Monastery, where he lived in ascesis, alone, for many years. Then he reached to be a famous miracles-worker, for the ill people living in villages, so that many went up to him and they were healed. He asked them to totally fast for three days, he receive their confession, he read to them the exorcisms of Saint Basil the Great, and by the gift of Christ they turned home healed. This pious was also a famous confessor for the hermits from Ceahlău Mountain and for all the people who reached his monastic cell. Pious Patapios himself was one of his disciples.

By so living in ascesis, Hieroschemamonk Nicandru and Schemamonk Patapios advanced much in the love for God, and they moved to the eternal life around the end of the Century XVIII. They names are connected, even today, to the toponyms of that area: “The Creek of Patapios”, “The Creek of Nicandru”, and “The Glade of Nicandru”[221].

METROPOLITAN THEODOSIUS
Of The Romanian Country
(b. 1620 - † 1708)

This metropolitan was a son of a peasant family from Argeş Country. Taking form his youth the yoke of Christ upon himself, he became a monk at Cozia Monastery, and then he reached to the abbot of Curtea de Argeş Monastery, which he guided, with spiritual wisdom, for more than ten years.

[221] Pr. C. Matasă, *The Guide Book of Neamț County*, p. 104; *Ibid.*, *The Palace of the Voivodes*, pp. 1-46.

There he proved himself to everybody as a worthy servant of the Church of Christ, pious, gentle, and good knower of the Holy Scripture.

Fos such gifts had by him, in the year 1668, Archimandrite Theodosius was elected metropolitan and spiritual father of The Romanian Country, replacing the deceased Metropolitan Stephen. So, by being him helped by God, he shepherded the Church of Hungary-Wallachia for almost 40 years, thriving in everything to confess the right-faith, to heal the people's sufferings, to built new places for prayer, to print churchly books in Romanian, and to comfort the poor and the orphans. For all those things, he was loved by the voivodes of The Romanian Country: Şerban Cantacuzino and Constantin Brâncoveanul, whose adviser and confessor he was, and also by the all the Orthodox people.

Among the books printed with the blessing of Metropolitan Theodosius, the most important is the *Bible* from Bucharest, issued in the year 1688. Among the first founders of the first Romanian *Bible* was counted also this venerable shepherd of The Romanian Country. Also, he printed a *Book of Liturgy*, bilingual in Slavic and in Romanian (1680), *The Book of Gospels* (1682), and *The Apostle* (1683), the last two ones both in the Romanian language, towards the comforting of the rightly-worshipping people. In addition to the care for the Church from The Romanian Country, Metropolitan Theodosius took care also of the Orthodox Church from Transylvania, ordaining there five metropolitans of Ardeal during his time in office, and granting numerous donations to the churches from the other side of the Carpathian Mountains.

Reached almost 90 years old, Pious Metropolitan Theodosius yielded his soul in the hand of the Lord, on 27th of January 1708, and he was buried near to the altar of the Metropolitan Cathedral from Bucharest[222].

Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul (ca. 1650-1716)[223]

a. His Life

Venerable Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul was born in Iberia. His parents, John and Mary, baptized him Andrew. Reaching in his youth slave to Turks, he lived for many years in Constantinople, learning Turkish, Greek, and Arabic, as he also learnt the craftsmanship of the sculpture, or the painting, and of the embroiling.

Around the year 1690 he was brought into The Romanian Country by Constantin Brâncoveanu. Here he learnt the craftsmanship of the printing press from Bishop Metrophanes, and after a year he became a monk and later on he was ordained priest.

[222] Fr. Prof. M. Păcurariu, *The History of eh Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, 1980.

[223] *The Romanian Saints*, p. 640ș Gabriel Ștrempel*, Antim Ivireanul*, 1972; Fr. Prof. Mircea Păcurarius, *The History of the Romanian Church*, Sibiu, 1972, pp. 191-201.

Between the years 19691-1694 he led the voivodal printing press from Bucharest, where he printed three books. Between the years 1649-1696 he founded a new printing press at Snagov Monastery. Between the years 1696-1701 he was abbot of Snagov Monastery, and he printed there 14 books, among which there were four books in Romanian, the other books being in Greek, Slavonic, and Arabic. Between the years 1701-1705 he led again the voivodal printing press, and he printed there 15 books, especially books for religious services.

Between the years 1705-1708 he was Bishop of Rîmnicu Vîlcea, and he founded the first printing press from there. During a period of three years, he printed at Rîmnic 10 books among which 7 in Romanian. Between the years 1708-1716 he was Metropolitan of The Romanian Country, founding there new printing presses and printing 19 more books, among which 12 were in Romanian.

In the autumn of the year 1716 he was imprisoned, at the order of the Turks, defrocked, and sent in exile to Saint Ecaterina Monastery from Sinai Mountain. On the way there he was martyred by the soldiers escorting him and thrown into Thuringia River, near Adrianople. Recently, a new hypothesis has been formulated arguing that he was drowned in the Lake Snagov.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. This blessed hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church was estranged from his parents in his childhood, and after he had suffered heavy temptations among pagans, he was guided by Christ to the Romanian land. Thus, he found here his second motherland, with parents, with brothers, and the whole comforting of the Holy Ghost.

2. By taking upon himself the yoke of Christ at Snagov Monastery, Hieromonk Antim reached to be skilled monk and unmatched typographer in The Romanian Country. For 15 years until he was ordained bishop, he founded two printing presses and he printed tens of churchly books in Romanian, Arabic, and Slavonic, proving himself to be the greatest typographer of our country between the Centuries XVII and XVIII. His books were spread in all the Romanian Provinces, reaching also Athos, Greece, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Sinai, Syria, and Iberia, for he was a devoted servant of Christ and a defender of the Orthodox Church.

3. For the holiness of his life, Abbot Antim Ivireanul was appointed Bishop of Rîmnic, and then Metropolitan of The Romanian Country. As shepherd of souls and spiritual father of everybody, the great hierarch was a torch for everyone, from voivode to the commoner. He was a wise man, instilled by the Holy Ghost, steadfast in his faith, strong in his hope, skilled in word, humble in heart, and full of the godlike love.

4. Wanting the salvation of the people and the officiation of the religious services in Romanian, Metropolitan Antim multiplied the number of the printing presses, and he translated there, in vernacular language, cultic books,

starting with *The Book of Hours* and *The Liturgy Book*. Among the 64 books printed by him and by disciples, 24 were in Romanian.

Thus, Metropolitan Antim remains the founder of the liturgical language in the Romanian Orthodox Church. Starting with him, the divine service has been done, all over our country, only in Romanian, towards the comforting and the understanding of everyone.

5. The good shepherd of the Church of Christ, after he adorned the religious services with book in the language of the people, after he adorned the religious services with books written in the people's language, he added other renewals too. Thus, he rebuilt churches in villages and cities, he founded the Monastery of All Saints from Bucharest (1713-1715), today called Antim, and he made many donations and renewals in monasteries. He raised several typographers and he gave many alms to the poor and to those who wanted to acquire education. For teaching and for defending the right-faith he wrote and printed numerous sermons, called Didaches, being a skilled theologian, hierarch, and preacher of the Holy Gospel.

6. Lo some of his many teachings:

6.1. "These two virtues found and strengthen the Church: the faith in God and the good obedience to the servants of the Church."

6.2. "What is dearer to the servant that his liberation? And what is dearer to the stranger than the turning back to his motherland?"

6.3. "The man owes to rejoice of the great kindness of God and to fear God's glory with tremble. And to asks for His help and for His rich mercy. This is because without His mercy we won't be able to do anything for the salvation of our souls."

6.4. "Without these three good things – the faith, the hope, and the love – it is impossible any means for the Christian to be saved, because these are the foundations of the Christendom."

6.5. "As it is not possible to somebody to live on earth without bodily food, without clothing, and without sleeping, likewise it is impossible to one to live without these three good things: faith, hope, and love."

6.6. "The hope is a true daring towards God, given within the people's heart out of godlike shining, in order the people never to lose hope for the gift from God, but they to be sure that they will take, by repentance, the forgiveness of their sins and any other passing or eternal ask."

6.7. "There're two kinds of hope: one good and one bad. It is good when somebody hopes in God for getting saved, or for wanting to do any good things, as David says: 'He who hopes in God will be surrendered by mercy' (Ps. 31: 11[224]). The hope is bad when somebody hoped in man to do something good to him or for some advice regarding the passing things of the world. This hope is

[224] In King James Bible (in continuation KJB) we have: Ps. 32: 10. For more details download, for free, *Notebook 1 – Comparative Study of the Psalms*¸ from www.academia.edu. (E. l. t.'s n.)

liar and vain, as the same David said: 'Do not hope in boyars, towards the sons of people into whom there is no salvation' (Ps. 145: 3[225])."

6.8. "The love is a union of many on the same way to God and spring of all good things. And the love is of three kinds: one godlike, one natural, and other passionate and evil."

6.9. On other occasion, humbling himself, Metropolitan Antim said:

"Being blinded by the worldly vanities, we do not rejoice of anything else but of the things of the darkness of this age. Because we are totally tending to evilness, as a runaway wheel that cannot stop itself down on a slope. And all of these do not come out of something else but only out of our faithlessness. Because our hearts have become petrified among evil things like Pharaoh and we horse around like some wild horses, without rein and without shame, until we will fall into a precipice and perish.

Therefore, I am telling you, my beloved ones, and I am teaching you with the fear of God, as a souly father and shepherd that I am to you, you to come into your senses and you to repent yourself for the impious things, for God is merciful, and if God sees our turning and your good repentance, He will forgive us. For He says through the mouth of Isaiah: 'Turn yourself to me and I will turn Myself towards you' (Isa. 45: 22)."

6.10. He also said:

"As the sheep cannot be without a shepherd, likewise neither the people cannot be without hierarch and let anyone who take care of the souly things to ruin at me and at a father, for I will heal him by the help of Christ. For Christ has given you to me in order I to souly shepherd you, as on some speaking sheep, and on my neck hand your souls and all of those will ask for you from me, as long as I am your shepherd, and not form others."

6.11. "As the emperor imposes us taxes, likewise God asks us for faith and good deeds. For Christ says in the *Gospel*: 'Give to Caesar what belong to Caesar, and give God what belong to God' (Mk. 12: 17)."

6.12. Do not reckon that God will have mercy on us, or that He will forgive us because we have needs, if we don't work His commandments according to our possibility, because otherwise He will throw us there where we won't be able to escape. But let's renounce to our bad and indecent habits, so that God could have mercy on us and Him to forgive us and Him to deliver us by his rich mercy.

6.13. At the beginning of the Lent, he was teaching his spiritual sons like this: "Let anyone shun the sins done with understanding (knowingly and willingly), for in what day one commits that, on that day he will die with death. Because there is no worse death than somebody to be separated from God through sin. This is for John says: 'he who commits the sin he is from the devil, because since the beginning the devil commits sin' (1 Jn. 3: 8)."

[225] In KJB we have: Ps. 146: 3: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help."; in the Romanian Orthodox Bible (in continuation ROB) we have: Ps. 145: 3: "Do not trust the strongmen, neither the sons of people, in whom there is no deliverance".

6.14. "On all the days form the year's garden, let each of us eat the things appointed to nourishing the body, with reckoning and without cunningness. And the fasting decided for souly benefit, which we can do it good of bad by our understanding, let nobody break it, for on the very day one breaks it he will dies with death. For he transgresses the commandment of God. And worse death than transgressing the commandment of God there's no other. Because he will be banished away from the Church's Garden, as Adam was banished from Paradise."

6.15. "Wanting us to undertake this trip upon the enemy of our souls, we must take with us five things which to be our food in time of danger. These things are; the confession, the prayer, the fasting, the giving of alms, and the love."

6.16. "Let's wash up our sins with the confession, by confessing our sins in front of our confessors with fear and with a broken heart, accusing ourselves, as in front of God. Let's not blame others, let's not say that we have been forced to because we have been helpless, so that we committed that sin, because we won't benefit anything of that, as Adam didn't either. Because Go wanted to bring Adam to repentance, but Adam, instead of admitting his mistake and instead of confessing his sin, he blamed God for giving him a woman."

6.17. "Let our confession of our sins be in good hope, let's hope that God will forgive us, and let it not be accompanied by despair, as Cain did by saying: 'My guilt is bigger than it can be forgiven to me' (Gen. 4: 13). Likewise, in case of Judah, despite he confessed his sin in front of the hierarchs that he sold innocent blood, that confession of sin was useless to him, because he confessed in despair."

6.18. "Let's accompany our confession of our sins with the thought of no mistaking anymore. This is because Pharaoh, despite he confessed that 'I have mistaken to the Lord' (Exod. 10: 16), he didn't benefit anything because of not thinking at leaving those evil things. That's why too he perished. And let's have a good hope that, if we confess our sins with a clean heart and thinking at no mistaking anymore, God will forgive us and we will hear as David heard: 'The Lord removed your sin, you won't die' (2 Kings[226] 12: 13).

6.19. "Let's ask in our prayers for salvation from God, and God will give salvation to us, as Christ Himself says: 'Ask for it and it will be given to you' (Mt. 7: 7). This is for that prayer that is done with warmth, wholeheartedly, it will penetrate the heavens and it will enter God's ears."

6.20. "We ease our body by fasting, in order to clear our mind and to rejoice our soul, in order the gift from God to come upon us. And we must intertwine the fasting with ceaseless prayers. This is because, as the food is not sweet without salt, neither the fasting is without prayers."

6.21. "As the holy angels are defending those who fast and they protect them against all dangers, likewise the devils are guardians to those who don't

[226] In KJB this book is usually called 2 Samuel. (E. l. t.'s n.)

fast and they urge them to many sins. Therefore, let's strive not be partakers with the devil. This is because no one among those who satiated themselves with foods has become disciple to the good things. Then we too will receive mercy from God, as it is said in one of the Blessings. And if we give alms out of what we steal, we will be condemned even more."

6.22. Let's convince ourselves with love, that fi we love our neighbors as ourselves, and if we do good to them, according to God's commandment, we too will be like Him and like Those from Above, as David says. This is for the love in God Himself and he who remains into love he will remain into God and God will remain into him (1 Jn. 4: 16)."

6.23. "What would benefit one of having his body empty of food, but filling his soul with sins? What will us benefit of being pale and withered by fasting, but being us lit with envy and hatred? What will us benefit of not drinking wine, but being us drunk of the anger's venom? What will benefit somebody of not eating meat, while he is tearing the flesh of his brothers with his words? What would we benefit of stopping us from doing the permitted things, while doing the unpermitted thins? This is for God loves and honors those who stop themselves form doing the forbidden things."

6.24. "When we enter the holy church, let's in the first place clean up our sins and our cunning thoughts, and then with a whole conscience let's make ourselves chosen vessels, in order us to receive, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, the word of God within our hearts."

6.25. "Four are the souly good things: the valiance (the manhood), the wisdom, the righteousness, and the cleanness. Four too are the bodily good things: the strength, the wholeness, the beauty, and the health. Out of those good things of the soul and of the body are born: the faith, the hope, the love, and the humbleness."

6.26. "Without faith it is impossible us to be saved. The faith's place is within man's heart, and its life are the good deeds, as Apostle James says: "As the man's body is death without soul, likewise the faith is death without good deeds" (Jas. 2: 26).

6.27. "The humbleness is the end, the connection, and the seal of all virtues, so that if somebody had committed all the good worldly things but he had no humbleness, all of those would be lost, all of those would be broken, all of those would be nothing, and their toils would be in vain, because the humbleness is the mother of all the good things."

6.28. "As the mother toils much due to her natural love, so that she feeds her children to raised them up and she protects them against all the things so they are not endangered by any peril, for she doesn't' want to lose them, likewise the humbleness nourished the good things (the good deeds) in order they to grow up and to be protected against all dangers and not to be lost. This is because the first and the biggest sins of all sins is the pride, invested and born by satan."

6.29. "The sin resembles the stone trying to go to her mother in the soil, where the stone comes from. And the kindness resembles to the fire always

trying to go upwards, towards the sky, where it is its origin, for God is a consuming fire and flame of thin fire, as Prophet Elijah saw Him."

6.30. "As somebody has in his house gold, silver, tools, and clothes, and when he leaved his house he locks up the door, so that no thief can enter and cause him losses, likewise the humbleness locks up all the good things, in order the common thief, the devil, not to steal those and to cause him lose his earnings."

6.31. "The faith, leaning on love, it grows, it widens, and it brings forth all the fruit of the good things, for the soil of the faith is the love."

6.32. "If Adam had listened to God's commandment, it wouldn't have come so much punishment upon mankind. And we, now, if he listened to Christ, we wouldn't be into so many sufferings and needs."

6.33. To them who don't forgive their fellow humans, Metropolitan Antim told: "You, who hate your brother so much than you don't want even to see him, and you envy him and you gossip him to other people, in order to cause him losses and to submit him and to make him poor, you, truly, are not Christians, neither are our a man on earth, but you surely are satan who accused God to Adam."

6.34. He also added: "Who is that priest who takes your confession and then allows you, who accuse your brother, to be imparted? That one is not a true priest, but he surely is Judah and a traitor of Christ and neither that priest will be forgiven, nor you, regardless how many good things you would do. For Christ says: 'Mercy I want, not sacrifice' (Mt. 12: 7)."

6.35. Let's run to the holy churches, if not daily, because of much helplessness and because of many needs of ours, which always come upon us out of the world's waves, let's at least do that on Saturdays, on Sundays, and on holidays. This for that was the reason which these holy days have been appointed for. One in order us and our beats to rest for the toils we undertook for the whole week. The second for giving thanks to God for the many and untold good things He has showed towards us and he always show those as a merciful. The third, in order us to hear the songs and the religious services made for the soul's salvation.

6.36. As the man's body cannot live without sensitive food, likewise the soul cannot live without spiritual food, which is the word of God, as Christ says into *Gospel*: "Not only with bread the man will live, but with any word that comes out of God's mouth" (Lk. 4: 4).

6.37. When we exist the church, let's not do than by being us empty; but let's do like the hedgehog does: for he firstly eats its full of grapes, and then he shakes the vine and then he rolls over the grapes which fall on the ground and they will be pricked by and stuck on the hedgehog's quills and so he will bring those grapes to its baby hedgehogs. Let's us too, bring to our homes, each of us, to our children and to those who haven't attend the church, some of the words heard by us at the Holy Liturgy.

6.38. The repentance will be repentance if somebody willingly goes, without being forced at all, to confess his sins to his confessor, with

humiliation, with a broken heart, with hot tears, and with a consummate thought, in order him to no longer commit sins. This is for all of these are the foundations of the repentance.

6.39. The mystery of the repentance is equal in honor and in work to the Holy Baptism. This is for as the Baptism washed away the ancestral sin and it makes the man happy, holy, consummate, and a son of God according to grace, likewise the holy confession of the sins makes the man from dead alive, from dishonored into honored and saint, and from the son of the disobedience into the son of God.

6.40. Not only the laymen owe to confess their sins, but even more must do that us the churchly ones, namely the deacons, the priests, the monks, and the hierarchs. Because we are more sinner and we mistake in front of God more than the simple people. And the mistake we do, we do them rather knowingly, and if we don't repent ourselves, we will have a harsher condemnation than those who mistakes because of their nescience, as it is said at the Holy Gospel that "He who knows much, he will be punished much, and from him who have been given much it will be required much" (Lk. 12: 48).

6.41. It won't be possible for somebody to reach the peace of the salvation if he hasn't entered firstly the door of the patience. It won't be possible for somebody to ascend to the heavenly city of the happiness if he hasn't humbled himself in his ghost, here, in the city of the earthly things.

6.42. It won't be possible to somebody reign together with Christ in heavens, if he doesn't follow here on Christ's traces with his cross. It won't be possible for somebody's name to remain famous in the world if he commits evil and impious deeds.

6.43. The man mistakes on three ways. Because of his weakness, because of his nescience, or because of his ill nature (will). The sin committed because of weakness is against God the Father, for the Father is called almighty. The sin because of nescience is against the Son, for the Son of God is called wisdom. The sin because of the ill will is against the Holy Ghost, for the Holy Ghost is called kind.

6.44. The man who commits mistakes because of his weakness, of because of his nescience, he will be more easily forgiven by the Lord, if the man repents. This is for David says: "The sin of my youth and of my nescience, Lord, do not mention them" (Ps. 24: 7[227]). And he who mistakes because of his evil nature (will) against the Holy Ghost, that man's sin won't be easily forgiven by God. This is for the Lord says: "Any sin and any blasphemy will be forgiven to the people, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost won't be forgiven" (Mk. 3: 28-29).

6.45. The souly man, namely the churchly man, he owes to be kinder than the layman, so that anyone could take him as example and learn from him, by seeing hid good deeds. This is because God doesn't get so angry on the stupid (simple) people who commits sin, as God gets angry on the churchly and

[227] In KJB we have Ps. 25: 7.

on the honorable man. That's why he owes to be only kind and not to commit sins.

6.46. There are many in the world calling themselves as shepherds and saying that they take care of sheep. This is because they, the wicked say, only by word, but by their deed they are as far as the heavens is from earth. This is for they don't take care of the benefit of the sheep, but they strive only for their benefit, and they don't deserve to be called by somebody as shepherds, but as hirelings, or I should rather call them thieves and robbers, because they leave the sheep to be eaten by wolves and they jump over the fence in the foreign flocks, to steal, to stab, and to destroy.

6.47. The good shepherd owes to have three things: a clean faith, a wisdom that is whole, and a staff in his hand.

Let him search with his clean faith for the good and for the benefit of his sheep, and not only for the healthy and whole sheep, but also for those who are ill and shaken. Let him shepherd the people with his wisdom, giving to each one teaching according to his age and order. And let him with the staff held by him in his hand, namely with the mastery and with the gift of the Holy Ghost, to punish (to rebuke) both the sheep and the wolves of the thoughts and the wild beasts coming upon the sheep. This is for, verily, the more the sheep remain unpunished, the more they will fall into countless passions. Likewise, the wolves too, if they do not see the staff in the hand of the shepherd, they will fearlessly kidnap and eat the sheep. This is for David says in a psalm: "Your staff and Your rod caressed me" (Ps. 22: 5[228]).

6.48. As there are many illnesses in the body and they cannot he healed with only one medicine, likewise the good shepherd cannot rest you with only one type of teaching, neither can he correct all the human natures. This is for different teachings are needed for the man and for the woman; different corrections are needed for the old man and for the young man; different advices are needed for the rich and for the poor; different comforting is needed for the glad and for the sad; different rebuke are needed for the master and for the servant; different urges are needed for the daring and for the fearful; different appeasements are needed for the gentle and for the angry; different works are needed for the taught and for the illiterate.

6.49. That shepherd who wants to do his shepherding according to the lay and to the justice, he always must hold in his staff in his hand, namely the rebuke and the reproach, and, as needed, him to punish the sheep and to banish away the beasts. This is for this is the good purpose of his shepherding to keep the sheep and to guard the sheep with spiritual health, namely with teaching.

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[228] In KJB we have: Ps. 23: 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."; in ROB we have: Ps. 22: 4-5: "For even I walk in the middle of the night, I won't fear any evilness; for You are with me. // Your staff and Your rod, these ones caressed me." (E. l. t.'s n.)

6.50. When Jesus resurrected Lazarus, he firstly commanded for the stone to be removed from that tomb, and then he resurrected Lazarus. This was for the sinners to understand that is they do not remove from themselves their evil habit, by their own will, it will be impossible to them to resurrect and to repent.

6.51. He who has obedience, he has together all the gifts and all the goods. That one is whole in mind, that one is patient, that one is humble, that one is gentle, that one if forgiving, that one loves the foreigners, that one is pious, that one is peaceful and, shortly, that one is the dwelling place of all good things.

6.52. God is Father of everybody. He loves all of us as some true sons of His and His loving mercifulness on people cannot stand us to always be in wickedness and in needs, and He only waits for our prayer. He takes heed at our voices, He always keeps His ears open, in order Him to listen to us immediately as we call His holy name.

6.53. Who is that father that gives bread to his sons without they asking him for bread? Likewise, we too, we desire God to help us and Him to have mercy on us, but without us praying him. "Poor proud my soul hated", says the Lord through wise Sirach (Sirach 25: 4[229]). This is because God cannot stand by any means those who are needy, wicked, and miserable, but they are lofty and they stand proudly among their needs and they don't want to show that they need something. And who are those? We all are those, because of suffering so many insupportable sufferings but we still hesitate. We perish into needs, we perish in disasters, but despite all of those we don't humble ourselves in front of God, neither we bow down because of our much stubbornness, and that's why we do not run, with sighs and with tears, to ask God for help.

6.54. When there are common evilness and common punishment, there ought to be also common prayer. Let all of us to pray, as the Apostles did in that ship when it was engulfed by storm, so that all of them shouted out with one mouth and with one heart: "Lord, save us because we are perishing!" (Mk. 4: 38). And do not allow one to pray while another doesn't even thing about praying; don't allow one to cry and another to laugh, or one to be sad and another to be glad. In such cases, truly, God won't listen to us.

6.55. I urge you, my sons, all of you to pray together and all in the same time. And especially during those times when the needs multiply and we are all together surrounded from all quarters by misfortunes, by troubles, and by sufferings. God will always listen to us, when all of us with a clean heart will pray to Him and He will save us from all dangers and needs. This is for David says: "The will of them who fear Him he will do and their prayer He will hear and He will save them" (Ps. 144: 19[230]).

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[229] We don't have *The Book of the Wisdom of Joshua, Son is Sirach (the Ecclesiastes)* in KJB, but they are given in ROB. One can find an English translation of it on www.academia.edu, where one can freely download from the text of 14 *Bible Missing Texts*, a manuscript of a translation made by E. L. S. E.

[230] In KJB we have Psalm 145: 19. (E. l. t.'s n.)

6.56. Before Christ's suffering we were surrounded by five undefeated enemies, which were always standing against us and which led us to big and unhealed corruption. These were: the sin, the death, the hell, the devil, and the body.

The sin has been quenched by the spelling of His all-precious blood and nothing will be able to corrupt us except if we are mastered by some evilness. The death, which has been born out of sin, He has killed it with His death. The hell, that is the consummate payment for the sin, by His descent into it He emptied it and He broke it. On the devil who is the start of all sins and the tormentor of our souls, He tied him up and He threw him in the deepest precipices of the hell. And the body, through His sufferings and by His crucifixion, He appeased its passions and He cleaned it.

6.57. As happier is that sailor whom the strong wind rather brings him to the peace, than that one who is sailing at sea with a great peace and without wind, likewise happier is he who through his quick and untimely death is moved to the peace of the godlike happiness.

6.58. Our Lord suffered through all His senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. Likewise, it is right everybody who is a Christian and who is a follower to Christ to suffer through all senses.

His eyes to shed tears for him crying for his sins. His ears to patiently listen on all days to the readings, to the songs, and to the churchly religious services. Let him not smell with his smell anything but only the spiritual scent coming out of words and out of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Let his taste guard a consummate fasting and living on bread and water, only for surviving, and not with diverse foods and with many drinks. The touch, also, for it is guiltier than the other senses, it owes to be humbled more than the others, by the restlessness, with prostrations and with many other toils, all which the body is restrained with.

6.58. It truly is great the gift of the repentance, out ow which everyone can know especially that much love shown by God towards us the Christians, and His desire for seeing us saved; once He appointed the repentance only to us the people, He wanted to be repentance within the world.

6.59. After the man commits the sin, he will remain dead. Dead, for he loses the godlike gift; dead, for he separated himself from God Who is the true life. And his passions and his body's lusts take him to be buried outside the city, outside the blessed land of the Paradise, in the pit of the eternal torments.

6.60. Great is the power of the repentance, once it resurrects the dead soul of the sinner, it gives him again the adornment of the godlike gift that he has lost, it opens to him the doors of the heavens which were locked up to him by his sin, it makes him companion to the blessed angels, it makes him inheritor, it makes him dwelling place of the God and partaker to God's godlike glory.

6.61. In order the repentance to be able to commit these all-glorious things, it owes to be a true repentance, and not a liar repentance; a clean repentance and not a cunning repentance; a repentance of the heart and not a

repentance of the mouth. This is because as there is true gold and fools' gold, likewise there is true repentance and liar repentance. This is for David's repentance was true "with humiliated ghost and with a broken and humble heart", while Saul's repentance was liar and cunning, only by mouth, and not from his heart.

6.62. Each Christian has three births. His first birth if bodily, out of his father and mother. His second birth is souly (spiritual) and it is not to all people, but only to them who have been born spiritually out of the bath of the holy baptism. And the third birth, that of the death, it is savior, without mistake, and without danger to the righteous and faithful man, for he will no longer able to commit sins after his death.

6.63. Great gift and merciful healing have been given to the man by God, so that the man dies, in order this body of the sin to be broken and to resurrect, at the general resurrection, another body that will be spiritual, without corruption and without death. This is for a great benefit brings the death to man, says Saint Gregory the Theologian, for the sin is cut off in order the evilness not to remain immortal.

6.64. In the introduction to the Document containing his Rules left to the Monastery of All Saints, built by him in Bucharest, the Great Hierarch Antim said:

Nothing is sop well received by God as the good deeds done to the poor and to the holy churches. For this we see that in the Holy Gospel our Lord Jesus Christ doesn't make others inheritors of His Heavenly Kingdom but only those who made good deeds in this world. Namely, on those who gave alms to the poor, who satiated the hungry, who watered the thirsty, who dressed up the naked, who comforted the strangers, and who visited the ill ones and the inmates.

6.65. In his Document of Rules, Metropolitan Antim ordered to be done, out of the monastery's income, many giving of alms to the poor people, namely: to be educated for free, three children, for four years; the dead ones, who were poor, to be buried for free and to be remembered at the Holy Liturgy for 40 days; in the 52 Saturdays over the year, to be given alms to each inmate the amount of 20 coins, and on Sundays to he shared to each poor 13 coins; on the Blessed Thursday to be given clothes to three poor boys and to three poor girls; on each year, on 27th of October, to be given to a poor girl a material help for her wedding, as much as it will be needed, as also other kinds of giving of alms.

6.66. Also, the pious shepherd of the Church of Christ decided to be done the due prayers, on certain days over the year, for the Voivode, for the benefactors, for abbots, and for the blessed founders and givers of alms. And in November, he ordered to be done a Holy Liturgy on all five first days of the week, as himself said in his Document of Rules:

- on Mondays for all my teachers and tutors, and to be shared 40 coins to the poor people;

- on Tuesday for all my confessors who have been making me spiritual in this life; to be given 40 coins to the poor people;

- on Wednesday for all my acquaintances in this life and for all my friends and givers of alms; to be given 40 coins to the poor people;

- on Thursday for all my servants who served me in this life, both laymen and monks; to be given 40 coins to the poor people;

- on Friday for all the people I upset or I troubled or I persecuted or I spoke evil of them; and to be given 40 coins to the poor people.

This religious service and this giving of alms I leave it as covenant to be done without interruption, on each year, as long as the church will stand.

6.67. So toiled for the salvation of his flock, this gentle and humble and all-wise father of The Romanian Country, by teaching, by rebuking, and by comforting everyone, for 26 years. Then, being him appointed to die for the truth, he was cruelly tormented and drown by Turks, giving his soul in the arms of Christ. Thus, the Pious Metropolitan Antim is counted in the group of the Romanian Holy Martyrs and he is praying in heavens for the salvation of our souls.

BISHOP PACHOMIUS OF ROMAN
(1671-1724)

a. His Life

Bishop Pachomius (Penciu) was the son of Priest Euthimios and of the presbyter Ana from Gledin Village, the Bistriţa Năsăud Country. His baptism name was Peter. In the year 1697 he was tonsured in monasticism in the community of Neamţ Monastery, and between the years 1702-1704 he was abbot of the great monastery.

After he visited Pecerska Monastery and Saint Dimitrius of Rostov, he turned back to the monastery where he became am monk and he withdrew as a hermit on Chiriacu Mountain. On 15th of January 1707, he had been elected bishop of Roman, and after six years he withdrew himself again into wilderness and he founded the Pocrov Hermitage having as patron the Protection from the Mother of the Lord.

Because of the vicissitude of the times, in the year 1717 he went to exile in Transylvania, and then he settled himself down at Pecerska Monastery. He dies in the year 1724 and he was buried in the chapel of Saint Stephen from Pecerska monastery.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Great Bishop Pachomius was raised from his childhood in the fear of God and in the love for the Holy Church, being constantly nourished out of the Holy Scriptures and out of the teachings of the Holy Fathers. For that, since his youth, he chose the ascesis of the monastic life.

2. Taking upon himself the yoke of Christ, Monk Pachomius forced himself in all aspects to follow the advice of the great confessors from Neamţ Monastery, so that in a few years he equaled the measure of his teachers. Then, being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood and reaching to be a famous confessor, he was elected abbot of the great monastery.

3. As abbot, Archimandrite Pachomius created a current of spiritual renewal in the community of Neamţ Monastery. Thus, he gathered all the monks who had been previously scattered to subordinated units of the monastery and through forests, because of the often wars and desertions of the monastery, and so he formed a community counting more than 300 monks. Then he appointed good confessors, a weekly confession, and the religious services according to the rule. He appointed enlightened monks to translated the works of the Holy Fathers for the spiritual nourishment of the community and he encouraged very much the hermit-like life around Neamţ Monastery, for at those times of unrest many monks were living in ascesis in forests than in monasteries.

4. By seeing the pious the vanity of this life and by loving much the hermit-like life himself, he withdrew himself to quietude in the ancestral forests from around Mountain Chiriacu, where he lived in ascesis, in fasting and in prayer, for two years. And he advanced so much, by the gift of God, that he was knowing the future and he understood the deep of the Holy Scripture. He also was a worker of the Prayer to Jesus and especially an adviser of souls.

5. In the autumn of the year 1706, a few boyars visited Neamţ Monastery, and they were relatives of the Moldavia's ruler: Dimitrie Cantemir. On the next day, while hunting in the area, they got lost and they came across to the monastic cell of Pious Pachomius. So, they remained there for the night, and they prayer together, and the spoke many words about the faith out of the Holy Scriptures, so that the boyars were amazed by his wisdom and by the holiness of his life. Then they said:

- It would have been appropriate, father, you to be a bishop and a shepherd of souls, and not to stay as a hidden torch in this wilderness!

- Oh, my brothers, I am a sinner and I am not worthy of such honor, the hermit answered them.

On the next day, accompanying them for a while, the pious blessed them and told to them:

- Go ahead with Christ, and you will surely find enough game in the glade! And truly so, they hunted plentifully.

6. Remaining vacant the chair of the Bishopric of Roman, the Metropolitan of Moldavia took council with the Moldavia's Ruler whom they should appoint bishop, because there was no other worthy of that high position. Then the boyars who visited Neamţ Monastery told to them:

- We know a holy hermit living in ascesis on Neamţ Mountains, and he is worthy of being bishop, but how could we bring him here, because he runs away from official positions.

- God, the metropolitan told to them, and urge him to come to Iasi, and tell him that he is summoned for some dogmas, and we believe to Go that he will come.

So, the boyars brought Pious Pachomius to Metropolitanate, at the beginning of the year 1707, after the celebration of the Lord's Baptism, and the metropolitan urgently assembled his advisers and summoned the hermit to him and told him:

- We have called you, father, in order you to help us to defend the right-faith, for we have somebody teaching wrongly the dogmas of the Orthodox Church. Tell us, therefore, how must one understand the dogma of the Holy Trinity? And the dogma of the Lord's embodiment out of the Holy Virgin? And which are the means the grace works in the salvation of the man?

So, the metropolitan asked him other questions too, from the Holy Scriptures, and everybody was amazed by his answers, and after that, suddenly, the lord's advisers who were hidden behind a curtain came out and shouted out:

- Let Pious Pachomius be Bishop of Roman!

And all the people present there answered:

- Amen!

Then Archimandrite Pachomius, no longer being able to escape, was immediately ordained as bishop and inthronized on the vacant chair from Roman.

7. For 7 years as he shepherded the flock of Christ, Bishop Pachomius proved himself to be a great shepherd of souls. For he was ordaining only priest with a chosen life, knowers of the Holy Scripture, an in monasteries and in hermitages he was appointing skilled abbots and confessors, towards the praise of the Lord and for the comforting of the believers. He was also writing teaching books, he visited everyone, he gave many alms to the poor people, and he was striving much with the spiritual aspects.

8. In the year 1714 Bishop Pachomius felt himself ill and longing for his spiritual life from yore, so that he withdrew himself from the episcopal chair to his beloved quietude, on Chiriacu Mountain, where there were living in ascesis many chosen hermits. There, praying to Savior Christ and taking vigil for the whole night, he built in a glade a small wooden church under the patronage of the Protection of the Mother of the Lord, and he built monastic cells there, and he gathered around himself more than 30 hermits. Then he ordered the rule of hermit-like life, harsher than in any other monasteries or hermitages from Moldavia, and he issued a hierarchal order that Neamț Monastery not to intervene in anything regarding the internal businesses of Pocrov Hermitage.

10. The rules instituted by Bishop Pachomius at Pocrov Hermitage required consummate hermit-like ascesis, in permanent silence, in fasting, and in ceaseless prayer. For five days of the week, they ate only once a day, without wine or oil, and on Saturday and on Sunday it was allowed to serve wine, oil, cheese, eggs, and milk. During the Lent and over the week, the monks, especially the schemamonks, were allowed to withdraw themselves into the

forest, at their shacks, in order they to pray to God in loneliness. On each midnight, the monks were gathering together in the church, at the ring of the bell, and on Sundays all of them were imparted and ate in the refectory. The old and skilled ones in the spiritual fight were descending to the hermitage only once a week, while the newbies were living in ascesis for a while, and only after that they withdrew themselves in the forest. For waking up the monks at Matins, there was a bell on Chiriacu Mountain ringed at the due time by a monk appointed to that task.

This rule was thoroughly observed for almost a century. Later on, because the Pocrov Hermitage ended up under the leadership of Neamţ Monastery, so that it was imposed here too the same rules as in Neamţ Monastery[231].

10. The hermitage founded by Blessed Bishop Pachomius became, in a short while, the most famous in Moldavia. In that hermitage, as on the Chiriacu Mountain as well, there were living in ascesis numerous pious hermits. Among whom some of them were famous for their fasting, for exorcising, or thaumaturges; others were good confessors, workers of the prayer of Jesus and taught teachers; and others had the gift of the tears and they spent their whole life in silence and in humbleness, never descending to the hermitage, until their death. To these pious monks were running numerous ill people from villages and by the gift of Christ they were healed.

PIOUS MAVRA FROM CEAHLĂU
(Centuries XVII-XVIII)[232]

This spiritual daughter of the Romanian Orthodox Church and an offshoot of the Romanian land sanctified by the sacrifices and by the prayers of so many saints and pious loving of Christ people, she originated from a village from the Bistriţa Valley, not far from Ceahlău Mopuntain. Her parents raised her form a young age in the fear of God, accustoming her to the prayer, to the fasting, and to regularly attending the church. Especially during summer, her parent took her in pilgrimage to the great monasteries from Neamţ County, as there were: Casiana, Sophia, Silverster's Hermitate – also known as "The Little Hermitage", and especially to Durau that during the Century XVIII reached to be the most famous hermitage of nuns from Moldavia.

Reaching to be 20 and being her heart wounded by her love for Christ, she renounced to the passing things and, leaving her parental house, she chose the eternal things, namely the monastic humble life in prayer and in

[231] C. Voinicescu, "The Life and the Activity of Bishop Pachomius of Roman", *The Romanian Orthodox Church*, XC, 1972, no. 5-6, p. 611; C. Voinicescu, "Pocrov Hermitage and Its Importance for the Churchly Life and Culture form Moldavia in the Century XVIII", in *The Romanian Orthodox Church*, XC, 1972, no. 7-8, p. 832; *Romanian Saints*, p. 663.

[232] Deacon I. Ivan, *Pious Mavra*, in *Romanian Saints*, p. 416.

removal of passions, which helps much to the soul's salvation. She firstly lived in ascesis in the community of nuns of Silvester's Hermitage, also called as "The Small Hermitage", where there were living in ascesis a few souls loving of Christ, under the guidance of a gentle and humble female abbot.

After a few years she was tonsured in monasticism, receiving the name Mavra, instead of her baptism name Mary. And Mother Mavra was very zealous in her ascesis, gentle, humble, loving the most the silence, the church, and the ceaseless prayer. She was sleeping for a few hours on a chair, she was doing hundreds of prostrations, she was eating once a day on evening, and she limited herself to intaking a few pieces of dry bread soaked in water and a few vegetables.

For she wanted even more quietude, the Blessed Mavra made for herself a small monastic cell dug in the ground and covered with wood, nearby. During the day she was attending the church and she was accomplishing her tasks in the hermitage, and during night she was living in ascesis in unknown spiritual toils. And Pious Mavra advanced so much in that Paradise of the prayer and of the quietude, that even the birds of the sky and the animals of the forest were loving her and they were tamed in front of her. She was honored the most by deer. The old men from around Ceahlău Mountain say that the Blessed Mavra always was asking on the paths of the mountain, or even through villages, being accompanied by a deer. Among the known Romanian hermits, Pious Mavra was known as one whom the wild animals obeyed to, as also in the case of Saint Theodora from Sihla whom the birds of the sky were bringing food to.

The nuns form Ceahlău Mountain saw the ascesis of Pious Mavra and so a few souls gathered near to her shack and asked her for being their adviser towards Christ and their spiritual mother. And all of those nuns were of the same soul and thought. Their ascesis was this ceaseless prayer in love and in humbleness, consummate obedience into the joy of the Holy Ghost, eating once a day in the evening, long periods of taking vigil, and reading the *Book of Psalms* and other holy books.

From Silverster's Hermitage Pious Mavra withdrew herself to an even harsher ascesis, in a glade under the peak of Mountain Ceahlău, called Ponoare. There she was alone with God. Only her beloved deer was accompanying her, as a worthy disciple of hers, and the hand of the Lord was protecting her against any evil. And the Blessed Mavra was living in ascesis as a true bride of Christ, on Ceahlău Mountain, enduring with strength the bitter cold, the winds, and the deep snows, as also the fire of the temptations of all sorts, for she was there openly fighting the devil, the thoughts, and the nature's helplessness. Her disciples searched for her everywhere, and they found her on the mountain, and they gathered themselves, one by one, around Pious Mavra. Then, praying and crying together, and with the help of the believers from villages, they built in the glade several monastic cells and a small wooden church under the patronage of Tabor – the Transfiguration. From them, that glade has been called up to these days as "The Glade of the Nuns". In this oasis of quietude and of prayer, Pious Mavra lived in ascesis until the

end of her life, enduring the troubles joyfully, and giving thanks to God for everything. She also gave wise advices to her disciples and to the believers who ware climbing that mountain to ask her for salvation words and to bring them food and other necessary things.

Feeling her death near, she asked to be imparted with the All-Holy Mysteries, and then she called around her all her disciples, she gave them many spiritual advices, and she kissed them goodbye, shedding many tears.

After a short while, the nuns found her passed away in her monastic cell, and all of them were crying for losing her, and they buried her in the Glade from Ponoare. Her holy relics, as also the holy relics of other ascetic nuns, are hidden into the Galde of the Nuns until the end of time, and her soul delights in the group of the saints from heavens.

All-Pious Mother Mavra, pray to God for us!

PIOUS ANTHONY THE HERMIT
Iezerul-Vîlcea Hermitage
(Centuries XVII-XVIII)[233]

One of the great hermits of Carpathian Mountains was also Pious Anthony from Iezerul (Cheia) - Vîlcea Hermitage, also called by the believers from that area as Saint Anthony the Hermit.

Pious Anthony originated from one of the sub-Carpathian villages of Vîlcea County. Being raised form a young age in love for Christ and knowing a few hermits living in quietude, and at the right age he was tonsured in monasticism at Iezerul (Cheia) - Vîlcea Hermitage, where he lived in ascesis during his youth. Then, after progressing in prayer and in humbleness, with the blessing of the abbot, he withdrew himself on the Iezerul Mountain from nearby, around the year 1690. There he was living in ascesis alone, in a small cave, praising the Lord, day and night, and ceaselessly fighting the unclean ghosts and the helplessness of the nature. That was because, nobody but the hermits know how intense the temptations and the trials are upon those who live in ascesis like hermits.

Because of not having an own place for prayer, Pious Anthony took blessing and carved with his own hands a small chapel into the rock, working for three years. He was working during the day, and at night he was taking vigil and he was praying having his hands raised towards heavens, shedding many tears. After that chapel had been finished, Bishop Ilarion from Rîmnicu Vîlcea came and sanctified it. In that small chape Pious Anthony was praying ceaselessly. There he was making hundreds of prostrations, day and night, there he was reading the daily religious services and the Matins at midnight. On holidays and on fasting periods there was coming, from time to time, some hieromonk from the hermitage and officiated the Holy Liturgy. Thus, the

[233] *Ibid*, p. 496.

quietude, the loneliness, the stone monastic cell, the church, the ceaseless prayer, the reading of the writings of the Holy Fathers, and the cogitation at the godlike realities, they composed the earthly Paradise of Pious Hermit Anthony. There he was cleaning himself of pride and of the passing sweets of the nature, and there he was preparing himself daily for the immortal joys of the heavenly life.

Being heard everywhere about the holy life of Pious Anthony, there were coming on the mountain paths numerous disciples, monks, priests, and believers, to pray together with him, to ask him for advice and for prayers. And the blessed hermit was welcoming all of them with love, he was resting them, he was feeding them with the godlike words, and he was letting them to leave in peace, so that he created thus a true renewal of the spiritual life in that Oltenia from the foot of that mountain.

After 25 years of harsh ascesis and hermit-like life, Pious Anthony gave his soul in the hands of the lord, around the year 1714, being much cried for by his disciples and buried next to his small chapel, as one can see even today. The believers climb there during summer, they light up candles, they utter prayers, and the worship in the Cave of Saint Anthony, asking him for blessing and for help.

SAINT BESSARION THE CONFESSOR
(1714-ca. 1745)
21st of October[234]

This great defender of the Orthodox faith in Banat and in Transylvania, who fought against the forced union of the Orthodox believers with Rome. He was Serbian, born in Bosnia, in the year 1714. Being very pious and zealous for the hermit-like life, in the year 1738 he was tonsured in monasticism at Saint Sava Monastery form the Holy Land. After he turned back to Serbia, he lived there for a while as hermit, and for the holiness of his life he received the gift of working miracles.

The Orthodox Patriarch Arsenius from Carlowitz heard about his life and about his ascesis, and because of being at that time a great trouble in Banat and in Transylvania because of forcedly enrolling the Orthodox Romanians to Union with the Catholic Church, Patriarch Arsenius called Saint Bessarion to him and ordained him priest, and he sent him to defend the Orthodox faith in the North-West side of Carpathian Mountains. In January 1744, the zealous Bessarion left for Banat and he was welcomed that by people as a true saint. Hundreds of thousands of believers came to meet him on his way, listened to him, and turned back into the bosom of the Orthodox Church. Everywhere he urged the Orthodox people not to leave their ancestral law and to remain steadfastly into the carrell of the Apostolical Church.

[234] *Romanian Saints*, p. 466.

From Timisoara he went to Lipova – Arad, where he was listened to by a great multitude of believers. There he placed a wooden cross in the middle of the village, and nowadays the Orthodox undertake pilgrimages. So, he succeeded to unite almost all believers under the arms of the cross of Christ. Then he continued his Orthodox mission of catechizing the believers, who were coming in thousands to hear him, also in other localities Deva, Orăştie, and Săliştea Sibiului.

On 24th of April 1744, while he was on his way to Sibiu, he was arrested by the Austrian-Hungarian army and sent under guard to Vienna, where he was judged and thrown into the dreadful prison from Kufstein, at the order of Empress Mary-Theresa. There he endures harsh tortures for confessing the right-faith. After almost a year of torment and of being held in chains, he yielded his soul in the hands of our Savior Jesus Christ, being counted in the group of the pious fathers and defenders of the Orthodoxy, together with other holy martyrs and confessors form Transylvania.

Holy All-Pious Father Bessarion, pray to God for us!

PIOUS JOHN THE ARCHIMANDRITE
The First Abbot of Horezu Monastery
(† 1726)[235]

This loving of Christ abbot originated form Argeş Country. Entering Negru Vodă Monastery from Cîmpulung, he became a monk and in a short while he reached to be priest and abbot. This was because he was a skilled spiritual father to the monks and to the believers, and he was a good manager of the house of God, famous in all villages form that area.

Hearing the pious lord Constantin Brâncoveanu about Abbot John, and loving him much for his wisdom, in the year 1962 he appointed John as abbot and manager of his famous foundation from Horezu, which was being built at that time. And pious Abbot John guided the great monastery from Horezu for 33 years, being in all aspects zealous towards the holy things, like Mary was, and all-skileld manager of the external things, as Martha was.

Archimandrite John firstly supervised the works of building Horezu Monastery (1692-1697). Then he adorned it with a chosen painting work, being found worthy to be himself painted together with the family of the pious voivode. He led, also, the works for building the infirmary (1969) and the chapel of the founders, from inside, by the donation of the wife of the pious voivode. Hew personally helped to being built the hermitage of Saint Stephen, on the other side of Horezu River, founded by Stephen the son of Consnantine Brâncoveanu (1698), and on the northern part of the monastery he personally

[235] T. G. Balat, "John the Archimandrite, the First Abbot of Horezu Monastery", in *Metropolitanate of Oltenia Review*, 1966, no. 5-6, pp. 432-448.

founded the Holy Apostles Hermitage (1700) which he subordinated to the monastery.

Pious Abbot John led the works of building and of renewing other monasteries as well, as: Polovragi (1703); Surpatele, founded by Lady Mary (1706); the chapel of Cozia Monastery (1710), and so on, he being reckoned during his time as the most skilled "manager" of churches and of monasteries form The Romanian Country. And to the monks living in ascesis in the monasteries built by him, he asked them to remember him in their prayers, as himself said it: "I bow in front of you and I ask you for that on all Thursdays over the year, once a week, not to forget remembering me at the Holy Liturgy, so that my soul to rejoice of your holiness's prayers, and so that my wicked soul to hope in the glory of God…".

Pious John the Archimandrite was, also, the most intimate secret adviser, collaborator, and confessor of the family of the Martyr Voivode Constantin Brâncoveanu. And after the voivode's and of his four boys' martyrdom in Constantinople (1714), Abbo John remained the only parent and comforter by God of the wife of the blessed founder, who remained widow with seven children.

Finishing well the travel of this life, Pious Abbot John yielded his soul in the hand of the Lord, in the summer of the year 1726, being buried by the community of the monastery in the voivodal church.

HERMITS FROM THE GLADES' REFECTORY
The Sihăstria Valley
(Centuries XVII-XVIII)

In the hesychastic hearth from around Sihăstria Monastery lived in ascesis, during the past centuries, many pious loving-of-quietude fathers. On the path leading to the Sihăstria Hermitage, over Agapia Mountain, at only one kilometer in the forest, there is a small glade known up to these days as "The Refectory's[236] Glade".

There lived in ascesis for their love for Christ, until the middle of the Century XIX, several generations of hesychastic monks. And the ascesis of those monks was this: each one was living in ascesis, in his monastic cell, for the whole week, in prayer, in fasting, and in cogitating at the godlike things. On Sundays and on holidays they gathered, together with their spiritual father, for taking vigil for the whole night in the nearby wooden chapel. After singing the Matins, they officiated there the Holy Liturgy and they were imparted with the Body and with the Blood of the Lord. Then the hesychasts ate together the so-called meal of love, in a place of the glade specially prepared for that. At the end of that, they took Blessing from the spiritual father and they withdrew to their monastic cells.

[236] In Romanian we have the transliteration *trapeză* from the Greek τραπεζαρία (trapezaría).

In that place always lived in ascesis confessors skilled in prayer and wise in word, whom numerous hermits were running to, form that area. And the tradition was that, at least on imperial feasts, and especially on Christmas, to gather themselves at the Glade's Refectory all the hermits living on Sihla and Agapia Mountains. There they confessed their thoughts to the old man, they took vigil at religious service until dawn, praising the Lord, they were imparted with the Body of Christ, and they ate together, according to the tradition. Then they spiritually kissed on one another and left for their shacks. All the people visiting those hermits were rested and feasted, from where came also that place's names as "the Refectory's Glade", namely "the Glade of the Feast and of the Love"[237].

As a witness of the past, one can still see in that glade traces of monastic cells and a few fruit trees.

PIOUS AGATHON THE HERMIT
Agathon Monastery – Botoşani County
(Century XVIII)

Hieromonk Agathon (popularly called Agafton) became monk at Lady's Monastery, founded by Elena Rareş, in the year 1552. After many years of ascesis, he was called by God to the hermit-like life. So, he took with him two disciples and they withdrew in the nearby forests, where other few monks were living in ascesis too, and there they lived as hermits, in fasting and in ceaseless prayer, and Agathon reached to be a hermit and a famous confessor in Botoşani Country.

In the year 1729, Pious Agathon the Hermit, seeing that the brothers were gathering around him, "they went in that forest belonging to the voivode in Botoşani Country, the cleared the forest and the made a little monastery and they planted fruit trees nears to the monastic cells". That small hermitage having the patronage of the Holy Archangels, it was called, in the beginning, as *The Hermitage of Agathon*. There the pious gathered 20 hermits and they together lived in ascesis in the pleasure of God, until the middle of the century XVIII. The rule of the hermits was this: ceaseless prayer day and night, reading the psalms in their monastic cells, eating after sunset, The Holy Liturgy and the general impartation on Sundays.

This pious hermit was a great teacher of the quietude and of the prayer, so that no one among disciples reached his measure. He was also a skilled confessor of the hermits and of the laymen, and he was banishing the unclean ghosts, sacrificing himself for everyone's salvation. This was because he truly was a man of the love, sand there was no other hermit more famous than him, in that area. Feeling his death near, Pious Agathon blessed his disciples and he moved, peacefully, into the resting of Christ.

[237] Hieromonk Ioanichie Bălan, *Hermitage Hearts*, p. 56.

All-Pious Father Agathon, pray to God for us!

PIOUS ISAIAH[238] THE HERMIT
Sucevița Monastery
(Century XVIII)[239]

Hieromonk Isaiah had lived in ascesis, firstly, in the community of the Sucevița Monastery, under the abbots Iorest (1725) and Theophanous (1732). Then he wanted to follow the blessed hermits, so that he withdrew himself on the peak of a high hill nearby to the monastery, called "The Hill of the Big Fork", and there he lived as hermit for more than 30 years.

This pious firstly lived in ascesis alone in the forest, fulfilling many monastic toils and enduring heavy temptations form the devil. But, by the gift of the Holy Ghost he defeated the temptations and he was found worthy by God of banishing away the unclean ghosts from within people, so that his name was known everywhere. Numerous ill people were climbing to his monastic cell and they were healed there.

In the year 1760 Pious Isaiah gathered a few disciples around him and they built a small wooden church under the patronage of The Transfiguration of the Lord, and they founded there a hermitage on the Big Fork Hill. That hermitage lasted for more than 20 years, as place for quietude and fore prayer for the monks from Sucevița Monastery, and for the believers from that area it was a place for spiritual comforting. This was for Pious Isaiah reached to be a very skilled confessor, thaumaturge, and seer of the future, famous all-over Northern Moldavia. His live was shining on that mountain like a torch guiding towards Christ both monks and laymen.

In the year 1780, Pious Isaiah had descended to Sucevița Monastery, and after a short while he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hands of the lord. His hermitage continued lasting until around the year 1785, when it started to become derelict, as it happened to all the hermitages under the Austrian occupation.

PIOUS SEBASTIAN THE HERMIT
The Founder of the Hermit Hermitage – Vrancea County
(Century XVIII)

Hermit Sebastian became monk at Bogdana Monastery – Tîrgu Ocna, where he lived in ascesis during the first years of the Century XVIII. Then, wanting to withdrew himself to the blessed quietude, he became a hermit in the

[238] The Romanian transliteration in the original text was *Isachie*. (E. l. t.'s n.)
[239] Dimitrie Stan, *Sucevița Monastery*, Bucharest, 1923, pp. 33 and 103; Fr. Prof. Petru Rezuș, "The Life and the deeds of Saint Daniil the Hermit", in *Theological Studies Review*, VII, 1956, no. 3-4, p. 238.

ancestral forests of Tecuci County, on Siret River Valley. And his ascesis consisted of these things: at nigh he was praying in his monastic cell taking vigil and doing prostrations, and during the day he was working his vegetables garden and he was gathering healing herbs and flowers from the forest, but he was ceaselessly praying with his mind. Then he shared, as gifts, those herbs to ill people and by his prayers many of them were healed. So Schemamonk Sebastian became famous in all the villages from that area, and not a few ill people were coming to his shack and they were healed. This was for the Pious Sebastian was found worthy by God of the gift of healing the illnesses.

After such an ascesis, around the year 1740, there took place a heavy battle in those forests, between Moldavians and Turks, and many combatants died on both sides. On that occasion the army chief Sandu Şendrea was wounded too. The army withdrew, and the army chief was found in the forest by Hermit Sebastian, in heavy pains, and the hermit took the army chief to his monastic cell and tended him. The army chief told him in tears: "Holy father, if you heal me of this wound, and if I will escape with my life, I will build a church in this place and I will make here a monastery for monks, towards the praise of God".

Pious Sebastian took care of him with much love, so that in a few months the wounded was healed, by the prayer and by the herbs of the hermit. Then, army chief Sandu Şendrea, as thanks to God, he built there a church and a few monastic cells on his expenses, near to the hermit's shack, in the honor of the Holy and Great Martyr Dimitrius. That place was called "the Hermit Hermitage", in the honor of Schemamonk Sebastian, who was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, and so he became the first founder and abbot of that hermitage. In the year 1748 the church from there was consecrated by Bishop Ioanichie of Roman (1747-1769).

BISHOP IOANICHIE OF ROMAN
The Founder of the Vovidenia Hermitage – Neamţ County
(Century XVIII)[240]

This pious bishop originated from Neamţ Country, and he became monk at Slătiorul (today's Vovidenia) Hermitage. Entering the monastic ascesis at a young age, he had advisers, in the first place, the pious hermits from Pocrov. Then, he had become literate and he got accustomed to the fear of God, and so he became a monk and a shosen priest in that hermitage.

In the year 1746 Hieromonk Ioanichie was appointed abbot of Neamţ Monastery, and he made some extension to that monastery. And in the autumn of the next year, he was elected Bishop of Roman Eparchy which he

[240] *The Synodic Document of Neamț Monastery*, year 1873, manuscript no. 195, p. 13, the Library of Neamț Monastery; C. Tomescu, *cited work*, pp. 125-128; *The Founders' Remembrance List*, no. 172, the Library of Neamț Monastery.

shepherded with spiritual wisdom for 22 years. This bishop and steward of the Mysteries of God was full of gentleness and of humbleness. His heart and his monastic cell were open to everybody, with the same steadfast love he comforting and alleviating the human sufferings and steaking to everybody about Christ. For that reason, the believers were visiting him and they loved him as a true spiritual father and shepherd.

During his shepherding, Bisop Ioanichie founded and renewed many hermitages and monasteries from eparchy, as: Bogdana, Caşin, and Soveja; the hermitages: The Hermit, Buluc, Lepşa, Savu, and others. In Roman City he founded, at the Precista Mare[241] Monastery the first public hospital, maintains on the expenses of the church. Also, in Focşani City he founded in the inside the Saint Prophet Samuel Monastery a publish hospital under the same patronage. At both hospitals, Bishop Ioanichie was undertaking canonical visits, giving alms, and appointing hieromonks as servants and nuns as nurses.

Another foundation of Bishop Ioanichie is Vovidenia Hermitage nearby Neamţ Monastery, which he renewed from the around in the year 1749. In the place of the old church, he built a wooden church under the patronage of The Entrance in the Church of the Mother of the Lord. He also built monastic cells there, a refectory, he brought new bells there, and he changed the name of the hermitage form Slătioru for Vovidenia. Then he gathered there over 60 monks and he subordinated the hermitage to Neamţ Monastery. For almost two centuries Vovidenia Hermitage, together with Pocrov Hermitage, were withdrawal places, and places for quietude of the monks form the great monastery. There were living in ascesis the best and the most zealous schemamonks in fasting and in prayer.

At the beginning of the year 1769, the humble Bishop Ioanichie yielded his soul in the arms of Christ and he was buried under the porch of the church from Neamţ Monastery.

PIOUS BASIL THE HIEROSCHEMAMONK
Abbot of Poiana Mărului[242] Hermitage
(† 1767)

a. His Life

Pious Hieroschemamonk Basil was spiritual father of Abbot Paisius, and he was also one of the most famous teachers and workers of the *Prayer to Jesus* from Century XVIII. He was, as the tradition tells us, a relative of Paisius and he originated form an ancient family of Romanians settled in Poltava, towards the end of the century XVII.

[241] A possible English translation could be: *The Great All-Clean Mother of the Lord*. (E. l. t.'s n.)
[242] A possible English translation of Poiana Mărului would be: Apple's Glade. (E. l. t.'s n.)

Taking the cross of Chris upon himself, from a young age, he became schemamonk at Dălhăuţi-Focşani, around the years 1705-1706. There he got familiarized to the depth of the Holy Scripture and he read many writings of the Holy Fathers. Then, by the gift of Christ, he reached to be a great worker of the holy prayer and a spiritual adviser of the monks from that community.

Being ordained priest, in the year 1715 he reached to be abbot of Dălhăuţi Monastery, and he was a famous guide of souls, so that his name became known everywhere, even by the Lord of The Romanian Country, Constantin Mavrocordat. For 20 years while he was the abbot of Dălhăuţi Monastery, Pious Basil gathered around himself a community of over 40 hermits, whom he accustomed to obedience, to humbleness, to silence, and to the secret work of the *Prayer to Jesus*. Thus, Abbot Basil made of his community a true spiritual school of hesychastic living, according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, renown in The Romanian Country. His disciples, from The Romanian Country, Moldavians, Transylvanians, and Russians, they were living in a consummate love and good order. Then, because Dălhăuţi Monastery had become too crowded, there were settled hermitages around it: Trestieni, Ciolanu, Cîrnu, Răteşti, Rogoz, Bonătăşi, The Black Valley (Vrancea County), and others.

Around the years 1730-1733, Abbot Basil renewed Poiana Mărului Hermitage and he moved himself there together with 12 disciples. A s abbot to Poiana Mărului Pious Basil spiritually led all the hermitages from Buzău Mountains, which he regularly checked, either personally or by letters. One of his disciples was also Pious Paisius, whom he accepted at Trestieni Hermitage for a few years, and whom he tonsured in monasticism in the year 1750, at Mount Athos.

The rule instituted by Abot Basil was this: the living in consummate harmony, the daily reading of the Holy Scripture and of the works of the Holy Fathers, the practice of the *Prayer to Jesus*, guarding the mind clean, eating once a day, and weekly impartation.

As teacher of the prayer, the great abbot wrote also a few words on the guarding of the mind, on prayer, and on spiritual growth, which are short introductions to the Philokalian works of Saint Nilus of Sora, Philotheos, Hesichius, and Gregory of Sinai. His introductory words are true pages of Philokalia and guide towards Christ through the holy prayer.

Reaching the measure of the great hermits, Pious Basil yielded his soul in the hand of our Lord in the year 1767, leaving behind numerous disciples[243].

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Pious Basil form Poiana Mărului was not only the founder of a great Romanian hermitage that was famous beyond the country's borders, but he was also the spiritual father of other eleven hermitages and monasteries form

[243] Fr. G. Cocora, and H. Constantinescu, "The Apple's Glade", in *The Voice of the Church Review*, XXIII, 1964, no. 5-6, pp. 466-500.

Vrancea and Buzău Counties, which he personally organized according to the hesychastic rule established by him and he populated those with numerous disciples educated by him. Taking the hesychastic movement form Pocrov Hermitage where was initiated by the Pious Bishop Pachomius of Roman († 1726), the Blessed Abbot Basil was very skilled in the life of prayer, in the knowledge of the Holy Scripture and of the Holy Philokalian Fathers. Emphasizing especially on obedience, on reading, and on prayer, in the monasteries and in the hermitages from the center of our country, he succeeded to create a true current of spiritual renewal in the Romanian monasticism from the middle of the century XVIII. This great current, the second in size after that one form the Century XV initiated by Saint Nicodemus from Tismana († 1406), Leontius of Rădăuţi, and Daniil the Hermit, it will he consummated and spread in all Orthodox Countries at the end of the century XVIII and at the beginning of the next century, through the great Abbots Paisius from Neamţ Monastery († 1794), Gheorghe from Cernica († 1806), and Saint Calinic from Cernica († 1868).

2. Due to the geographical position of our country at the crossroads between the Orthodox Balkan Peninsula, where it shone Mount Athos, and the Orthodox Russia, with its hesychastic upsurge, Pious Basil from Poiana Mărului found here the most appropriate place for a renewed monastic life, both by prayer and by a kingly spiritual feeling. This skilled teacher of the prayer succeeded to harmoniously join in the hermitages form Buzău and Vrancea Countries the ascetic harshness from Sinai and Athos, with the mystical experience of the Slavic monasticism, and with the hesychastic tradition of hermit-like life from hundreds of hermitages and monasteries which the Romanian monasticism - so measure and balanced - had been in its spiritual life, without interruption, ever since Century IV. Thus, Abbot Basil renewed the monastic life form hermitages and from monasteries situated at the intersection of three experiences: Greek, Russian, and Romanian; and the great Abbots Paisius from Neam and Gheorghe from Cernica, followed by Saint Calinic, they will renew the spiritual life form the great Romanian monasteries and coenobitic communities.

3. The renewal of the monastic life from Poiana Mărului and from the other hermitages from Vraneca and Buzău started and it ended by a life of prayer, permanently supervised, for almost a half of a century, by the Great Abbot Basil. He asked his disciples to ceaselessly practice the *Prayer of the Heart*[244], even before they reached their removal of passions, and he also required them to live in consummate love and obedience, to love the silence, the humbleness, the fasting, and the poverty of material things. All of these, together with the strict observation of the churchly religious services which all

[244] *Prayer of the Heart*, or *Prayer of the Mind*, or *Prayer of One Thought* are other name for *Prayer to Jesus*. See, for a synthesis on *Prayer to Jesus*: GOLEA. Marius. 2023. *Saint Dumitru Stăniloae the Restorer of the Christian Theology -Quasi PhD Thesis*, Arad. pp. 1071-1088 (Ita can be downloaded for free from www.academia.edu). (E. l. t.'s n.)

the monks attended to, they contributed the most to the renewal monastic current sprouting out in the Poiana Mărului Hermitage.

4. About the *Prayer of the Heart* Pious Basil from Poiana Mărului was teaching that:

"Many, reading the book of Saint Gregory of Sinai and not having the work of the mind, they mistake in rightly understanding that book, by reckoning that this work was given only to the holy and without passions men. That's why, by taking heed at the custom from now, namely only the reading and the singing of psalms, or of the troparion, and of the canons, they make only the external prayer. They do not understand that this song prayer was given to us by the Father only up to a certain point, for our helplessness and childhood. This was for, after learning by reading and by singing, we to ascend to that stage of the working with the mind, and not to spend our time in these all the way to the very end. This is for, by reading and by singing with our lips the external prayer, we will remain in a joyful self-appreciation of ourselves, by reckoning that we do a great thing".

5. By reiterating the teachings of Saint Gregory of Sinai, Pious Abbot Basil from Poiana Mărului was teaching his disciples thus:

"Our singing must be angelical, as our living is too, and not bodily. This is because the singing with voice and with shouting out was given for our laziness and lack of understanding, in order to elevate us to that true prayer from within heart".

6. In continuation, Pious Basil added, citing the Great Sinaite:

"It is impossible to him who fight in this way, namely with the read prayer, from outside, to somewhen achieve spiritual peace, or to take the crowns of the victory. This is because one like this is like him who fight at night, who hears the voices of his enemies and who received wounds form them, but he cannot limpidly see who they are, where they are coming from, or how they strike him or why, because of the darkness making his mind blind. He who fight thus, with the external prayer, he won't ever be able to escape from being crushed by those of another nation. He endures the tiredness, but he loses his payment".

7. And for the cleanliness of the mind from thoughts and for descending the mind within heart during prayer, Pious Basil was teaching thus:

"If the senses from outside cannot stop the mind from thoughts, the mind will have to run out from senses, during prayer, into the heart's chamber, and to stay there deaf and mute to all thoughts. This is for, as the two-edged swords, regardless what edge you use, it will cut with its sharpness all the things happening to be in its reach, likewise works the *Prayer to Jesus*, as a sword, sometimes being turned towards the evil thoughts and passions, and some other times towards the sin, towards the remembrance of death, and towards the eternal torments".

8. Showing the great value of the *Prayer from withing Heart*, in comparison to that read and song, Abbot Basil was saying that:

"If somebody wants, without this *Prayer form within Heart*, only with the uttered and song prayer and with the senses imposed by the external resistance, to repel the enemy's attacks and to resist any passion of cunning thought, that one will be quickly and often defeated by the cunning devil, by making him to lean towards the vain-gloriousness and towards lack of attention, by reckoning himself as shepherd and a teacher of the speaking sheep".

9. And on the importance of the prayer and of the singing in the churchman how one must make those, Pious Basil taught his disciples the followings:

- Do not reckon, you rightly-believer reader, that the Holy Fathers taking us from the much-external-singing and commanding us to accustom ourselves to the work with the mind, they disregarded the psalms and the canons. Let that mot ne. This is for those are given by the Holy Ghost to the Church of Christ, within which is committed the whole work of the sanctification through ordination and all the work of the oikonomia of God the Word, until His second coming, which our salvation too is comprised within. This is for there isn't something human in the churchly rules, but all belong to the gift from God, not receiving any adding from our worthiness and no diminution because of our sins.

10. Cogitating at the words of Saint Apostle Paul: "I want to say five words with my mind than thousands with my tongue" (1 Cor. 14: 10), Pious Abbot Basil taught his disciples that we receive a greater benefit by uttering at prayer a few word with the attention of the mind and with the feeling of the heart, than thousands of words only with our tongue, without paying attention to them and without feeling them. Thus, the great teacher of the prayer taught that:

- We owe, in the first place, to clean up our mind and our heart with five words of this kind, saying from the bottom of our heart: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me". After we will have cleaned up our mind with this prayer, we owe to ascend to the understanding singing, namely to the singing and to the prayer within church. This is for any beginner, and still passionate, he can make this prayer with understanding into the guarding of his heart. Saint Simeon, the Archbishop of Thessaloniki, by having the same ghost and gift, he commands to the hierarchs, to the priests, to the monks, and to all laypeople to unite with their breathing, all the time and on every moment, this holy prayer. He says, together with Apostle Paul: "There isn't any other stronger weapon either in heavens or on earth, like it is the name of Jesus Christ".

He also said:

- He who lives rightly and without blemish, shunning himself from his pleasure and from having a haughty mind, even if all the devilish camps stood against him with thousands of temptations, he would remain unharmed, as the Fathers say. But he who walks according to his own rules and according t his own advice, namely in disobedience and according to his will, that one will fall

into deceit. This is because there are two causes of the deceit, namely of the falling off the clean prayer of the heart: working the good deeds according to one's own will, namely without obedience and advice, and the second one if the haughtiness of one's mind, namely the pride of the thought, which is against the humble cogitation.

12. Pious Basil, together-speaking with the Holy Fathers, said that there are three causes due to which some of the monks and of the Christians leave the holy work of the prayer of the heart. Some of them "leave this work only to the holy dispassionate men, because of reckoning that this work is appropriate only to those, and not to the passionate ones too". The second cause for leaving the prayer of the heart is "the almost total disappearance of the teachers of this kind of living". And the third cause is "the deceit coming out of this work", namely the temptation of the pride and of the won will. Or, for the diminution of the passions to the young monks one need the attention and the guarding of the heart, namely the prayer of the mind. And if the teachers of this prayer lack, "we will still have the writings of the saints as our teachers". Regarding the impediments feared by some people, themselves become impediments to themselves, "for one must not avoid going into the forest because of fearing the wolf. This is for you must fear only God, to do something of fear, and to reject the fear".

13. Regarding the importance of the fasting for the learning of the prayer of the heart, Abbot Basil from Poiana Mărului brings in the middle the words of Saint Basil the Great, who says: *"The restraint is established according to the bodily power of each of us*". Then he adds:

- Verily, one must take in account these words too, lest, by crushing with the overmeasure restraint the bodily power, to become his power exhausted and helpless to spiritual increase. This is for, if it had been good for us to weaken our bodies and to lie down barely alive, unmistakingly our Lord would have made us like so from the beginning. Since he has made us as we are, are wrong they who do not guard as it is what it has been done. That's why Saint Maximos the Confessor says: "Give to your body according to its power and turn all your ascesis towards the work of your mind". And Saint Diadochus says: "The fasting has praise in itself, but not from God". That's why, the rightly-believers owe not to get haughty for fasting, but they to see the target of our cogitation into their faith in God.

- The too early hermit-like life, says Pious Basil, it is cause for pride and for loving the self; while the living together with others uncovers your weakness to yourself, it defends you against temptations, and it can daily clean you up, by the grace of God, by working out of your love for the Lord.

15. And for the reading of the Holy Scripture, the Pious was teaching:

- Take heed at the reading of the Scriptures and, if you weren't a man, you would become a man, for the reading of the Scriptures is healing with much skillfulness and it is savior, but it is a great strengthening not to mistake the understanding of the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and it is a big and deep precipice not understanding the Scriptures. That's why we must know

also the writings of the Holy Fathers and of other ascetics who help us on our way to salvation.

Letter
Towards the All-Pious and My Spiritual Son into Christ,
Hieroschemamonk Mister Alexius[245]

Waiting I for your return with great longing, for against us to see each other face to face, I am sending to you, my beloved son and friend, again, my warm parental embrace and I am reminding you about the our covenant for living into the peace of the Lord: "If you forgive the mistakes of the people, your Father will forgive your mistakes too, and if you don't forgive the people's mistakes, neither your Father will forgive your mistakes", and "Whatever you want the people to do to you, that one do it yourself likewise" Mt. 6: 14-15; Lk. 6: 31).

I, my dear friend, being a helpless man, when I do something wrong to somebody, I want him to forgive me. I also force myself, despite my heart resisting me, I too to forgive my brother's mistake he done against me. But for how long? Not for seventy times, says our Lord, but for seventy times seven, and if somebody does something wrong against us and he is sorry, let us that too forgive to him. This is our rule and our guide, which is he guarded no one would break the love from amongst us and our together-living.

But, often, our tendency to cover our own mistakes and to excuse ourselves – a tendency called by somebody as a tool of the devil – it doesn't allow us to take the guilt upon ourselves, as we have the commandment to do it, but it urged us to blame our br0other and to reckon ourselves as innocent, what is obviously a mistake. My brother is guilty for upsetting me, but I have committed sin because of not enduring that. Both of us have mistaken in front of Christ's commandments, but we still blame each other, as Adam accused Eva and the snake. And thus, we will lose our souls and we will be condemned as those ones were, only because we try to excuse ourselves, and not because of our sin, because of not being in this world a sinless man, even if he were a saint, and even if he lived only a day on this earth. So, it is a clean thing that not only for our sins we will be condemned, all of us who resist the commandments of Christ, but also because of trying ourselves to hide our guilt. Let me say that somebody hit me over my cheek and I didn't want to endure that, so that I would throw the whole blame upon him, who, doubtlessly had a part of the blame, so that I would present him as a defamatory of the commandments of Christ, and I wouldn't blame myself for being impatient. Obviously, bot him who hit me and myself must be judges, because of I not having enough patience, I will take it upon myself the guilt of transgressing the commandment of the patience. That's

[245] This letter has been translated by His Eminence Antim, Archbishop of Tomis and of Lower Danube, from the Slavonic manuscripts no. 397 and 577 from the Library of the Romanian Academia, and it was published in the churchly tome of this eparchy, on the year 1986, pp. 44-46.

why Blessed Job too said: "If we say that we don't have sin, we will deceive ourselves and the truth isn't within us. But if we want, oh, my friend, that the truth to dwell within us, let's run away from the habit of excusing us, and if we admit our mistakes, then the truth will show himself plainly, by itself, or through the doors of the repentance. The self-unveiling of the ruth stays at the will of God, and finding out the repentance depends of our weal human powers".

Out of these, one can see that "our fight isn't against the body and the blood, but against the ghosts of the darkness, of the principalities and of the masteries from under the sky" (*Eph. 6: 1).*

So, comes to see us, quickly, my friend, as you have promised to be together-ascetic and together-fighter against the ghost of the evilness form under the sky.

(There are two more paragraphs in the original Romanian text, but we haven't been able to read them, because of the poor quality of the scanning[246]).

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. This loving-of-God hierarch was chosen from his childhood to serve the Church of Christ. At the age of 12, he was tonsured in monasticism at Putna Monastery and he quickly learnt the toil of the good deeds from Archimandrite Anthony, his spiritual father, so that everybody benefited of his wisdom and gentleness.

2. Literacy and the knowing of the deep of the Holy Scripture were learnt by young Jacob in the school of Putna Monastery. He learnt there, firstly, Slavonic and Greek, and then he translated the Old and the New Testament, the dogmas and the canons of the Orthodox Church, music for psalms, the typicon, and the most chosen teachings of the Holy Fathers. In a short while he surpassed everyone.

3. Reaching to be priest, confessor, and abbot of Putna Monastery, the good shepherd of souls raised many spiritual sons, both laymen and monks. This was because he was gentle and deep in his words, so that he became famous in the North of Moldavia and many had him as souly father.

4. Abbot Jacob increased the number of the monks in that community, he developed much the school of Putna Monastery, by bringing students and teachers among the best ones; he educated there chosen parishioner priests, calligraphers, and teachers of Greek and Slavonic; he translated cultic books in Romanian; and he renewed the rules of the monastery. During his time the community and the school of Putna Monastery were famous beyond Moldavia's borders. There came to be educated not only young men from that very area, but also from Maramureş area, from Năsăud area, from Galicia, and even from Greece.

5. For an ascesis like that, Archimandrite Jacob was found worthy of the honor of being ordained as hierarch, as he was appointed Bishop of Rădăuţi

[246] E. l. t.'s n.

and he was a skilled shepherd of the flock of Christ. During the few years as he was bishop, he instituted a spiritual order in all monasteries from his eparchy, he has chosen pious abbots and he strengthened the schools form the churchly settlements, and he was sending the parishioner priests to firstly become literate in monasteries, and then he ordained them.

6. As Metropolitan and father of Moldavia, Metropolitan Jacob proved to be, from the very beginning, a wise man, a very merciful and loving-of-clock shepherd, a full-of-zeal servant, a literate teacher, a true hierarch bestowed with a great courage, ready to yield his life for the salvation and to comforting his people. Rightly so, one can say that it had been a long time before Moldavia having such a shepherd.

7. The first thing done by Metropolitan Jacob was to print in Romanian the cultic books, the books for spiritual teaching and for teaching and educating the children. For 10 years as he shepherded the Church of Moldavia, he translated and printed, in the printing house from Iasi, more than 15 cultic books and books for teaching in Romanian.

8. "Loving dearly the theological culture", in addition to printing book in Romanian, Metropolitan Jacob of Putna developed much the spiritual school from Putna Monastery, appointing teaches among the more enlightened ones. In that school – a true theological academia – the Moldavia's shepherd ordered to be educated all the candidates to priesthood. This was because he was ordaining only those who had a diploma for graduating from those schools issued by the monasteries' abbots, and who lived a totally moral life.

9. For the believers form villages, Metropolitan Jacob printed prayers books and of Christian teaching, which were distributed "for free" by priest and by abbots. And for the children who loved learning, the great shepherd printed the first spelling book comprising the prayers, the commandments, and the mysteries of the Church, and he founded schools in the churches from villages and cities. Also, he appointed chosen teachers and priests teaching the spelling, the reading, the religion, and urging the believers to allow their children to attend the school.

10. As a true shepherd of the flock of Christ, the venerable Metropolitan took care both of the salvation and of the education of the people, and of the alleviation of their earthly sufferings. Thus, he multiplied the infirmaries from monasteries and from cities and he founded the first public hospital in the monastic cells of the Saint Spiridon Monastery from Iași. He also defended the peasants in front of the voivode, speaking against the heavy taxes imposed upon peasants, for he was always ready to sacrifice himself "for the love for Christ, for the Church's good, and for the benefit of the Christians and for their honor".

11. He urged the parents to raise their children in the fear of God, saying:

- You owe, you the right-worshipper Christians, and who have parental name over your children, to take care of their education, so that they won't be

deprived of the souly nourishment through your good guiding, which you owe to teach them[247].

12. He also said:

- The education is like the good-fragrance flowers, which with the fragrance of their teaching heal all the bodily wounds, and the illiterate is like the withered tree. And as the sun warms up and grows all the ones sprouted out by the earth, likewise is the literacy for it gives to the man understanding towards all knowledge.

13. Metropolitan Jacob also said:

- You see, parents, who leave your children illiterate, how much corruption and loss the illiteracy causes to your sons. For that I am urging you to wake up your hearts to the spiritual goods flowing out of the holy learning and to give your children to be educated in order you to prove yourself as consummate parents and as care bearers for the things beneficial to your sons. Following to our commandment and teaching, you will hope for rejoicing yourself and being glad for your sons as some made wise by God, and they will remember you[248].

14. And he advised the pious fathers from Putna Monastery, saying:

- with parental humbleness we urge you to work with the whole zeal and with ceaseless care the things given to you, the churchly talent. Namely, to water up with those all-sweet and watering waters of the priestly worthiness the speaking flock. And these are the ceaseless prayer for the salvation and for the forgiveness of the speaking souls which is being done by remembering thema t the bloodless sacrifice.

15. He added also this:

- I humbly pray all of you not to get lazy for your salvation and for the salvation of all souls, but you to work, without laziness, and with the whole zeal, the mysterious vine in order you to gain, together with them, the crown and the glory of the blessed ones. Leave, my beloved brothers, the worldly vanities, and enslave you heart to the untold goods of the heavenly kingdom. Humble yourself into the Lord in order Him to extoll you forever. Always remember the dead ones, father and brothers of yours, in order the Lord to remember you too, at His second coming. Small is the toil, but the resting is endless. Little is the toil, but the earning is countless. Little is the weeping on the earth, but the gladness countless[249].

16. On some other occasion he taught, saying:

- God built us in order us to rejoice of Him. And he who doesn't reckon that he has been created by God, he will lose his happiness and he hurts himself, as one who closes his eyes in order him not to see the light and he stumbles and he loses his path and he earn perdition to himself.

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[247] Preface to *Spelling Book*.

[248] From *Gathering Many Teachings*, Iasi, 1755, Metropolitan Jacob from Putna, chapter no. 60: *For Everybody to give Their Sons to School*.

[249] *The Remembrance List of Putna Monastery*, teaching no. 9.

17. The good shepherd also said:

- Do not rejoice of anything in this age of crying, and which is passing, since all the things in this age are flicking and hypocrite and liar and changing. But, if you want to be comforted, only the Lord will comfort you; if you want to rejoice yourself, you will rejoice yourself only into the Lord; this is for the bodily joy vanishes quickly, while the joy of the Lord remains forever.

18. He also added this:

- Rejoice into the lord and thank Him, for He laid everything rightly and mercifully for you, and He ceaselessly takes care of your soul. He uses you, and He defends you, and He covers you, and He strengthens your soul by giving you strength, health, and life; He makes you wise and He enlightens you towards all the good things. He works everything for your straightly and mercifully.

19. After ten years of spiritual shepherding of the Church of Moldavia, the great Hierarch, because of being forced by the Voivode of Moldavia to approve the raising of the taxes imposed to the people, he withdrew himself from his throne, saying:

- Lo that I have renounced to metropolitanate and to honor and to all the things of this world, only not to take the fire of the oath in my head and in my soul and, by reckoning that we are guests of this world and by believing than in the next world we are going to live and to answer for our deeds.

20. Withdrawing himself to Putna Monastery, he lived for other 18 years, in humbleness and in chosen ascesis. During that time, he gave many donations and he made many renewals to the monastery, and he developed much the spiritual school form there and he raise numerous disciples. Then, after he tonsured his parent into monasticism, a few days before his death, he put on the great schism under the name of Euthimios and thus he gave his soul in the arms of Savior Christ.

SAINT SOPHRONY THE CONFESSOR
Cioara – Sebeş Monastery
(Century XVIII)[250]

Pious Sophrony originated form Cioara - Sebeş Village, Alba County. Loving God much, form his childhood, he received the monastic schism at one of the hermitages from The Romanian Country, and he reached to be a famous hermit and fulfilled of the Gospel of Christ.

In the year 1756, turning back to his natal village, he founded in a forest there a small hermitage, known under the name of Cioara Hermitage, and he gathered there a few disciples. Then, because he saw the persecution and the injustice which the Transylvanian Romanians were submitted to, he walked for years through the villages from Transylvania, urging the believers to keep, with

[250] Fr. Prof. T. Bodogae, "Pious Sophrony from Cioara Monastery", in *Romanian Saints*, p. 358.

holiness, the right Orthodox faith. For that, at the order of the Prince of Transylvania, he was thrown into prison and awfully beaten for his zeal and daring.

After being released from prison, he again started confessing his right-faith through the villages from Apuseni Mountains. Then he was again imprisoned and tortured for Christ. But, with the prayer of the believers, he was released again, and on 14th of February 1761 he gathered a great assembly at Alba Iulia City, asking for equal right for the Romanian people and also asking for a Romanian Bishop for the believers from Transylvania.

In the same year, after seeing his wish fulfilled, he withdrew himself to Curtea de Argeş Monastery, and there he yielded his soul in the hands of Christ. The Romanian Orthodox Church canonized him in the year 1955, counting him in the group of the confessors, and he is remembered on 21st of October.

Holy All-Pious Father Sophrony, pray to God for us!

PIOUS RAFAEL THE HYMNOGRAPHER
Horezu Monastery
(Century XVIII)[251]

Monk Rafael the Calligrapher is counted among the most famous copyists of patristic works in The Romanian Country, for the Century XVIII. He was the son of Priest Dumitru from Stănceşti – Prahova Village, and his baptism name was Radu. By learning the fear of God since his childhood, and the work of the good deeds, and because of becoming and orphan, he was guided by Christ to the community of the Horezu Monastery, at the age of 10. And he was loved by the abbot and by all fathers from there due to his life's cleanness and holiness. This was because he was behaving humbly like a stranger, he was obedient, and he was the smallest among the monastery's brothers.

Abbot Dionysius entrusted him to the best teachers form the community, from whom he learnt Greek and Slavonic in a short time, as also how to write calligraphically. At the age of 14, the young soldier of Christ was copying, with much skillfulness, books of spiritual teaching, on the pages of which he usually added this note: "It has been written by the sinner servant of God Radu the Child, son of the passed away servant of God Prist Dumitru from Stănceşti – Prahova, in the Holy Monastery of Hurezu".

In the year 1754, on 2nd of April, on the Easter's Saturday, as himself wrote it, Radu the Child became a monk under the name of Raphael, and he remained for the whole his life as simple monk in the community of Horezu Monastery, having as tasks: singing in the pew and copying writings of the Holy Fathers. For over 30 years, Pious Monk Raphael copied tens of patristic

[251] G. Ștrempel, *Copyists of Romanian Manuscripts*, Bucharest, 1959, pp. 196-201.

books and of religious service for monasteries and churches. From those are still preserved today 15 manuscripts.

This monk who loved much-toiling lived for one year also in the community of Pious Paisius from Dragomirna Monastery, as himself wrote it. But then he came back to the monastery where he became a monk and continued there his holy task for other 20 years, when he moved to the heavenly dwelling places towards the end of the Century XVIII, being added to the group of the Pious Fathers.

PIOUS SILA THE HIEROSCHEMAMONK
Abbot of the Putna Hermitage
(Century XVIII)

Hieroschemamonk Sila was the most famous abbot of Putna Hermitage. He originated form Botoşani Country. He was firstly a disciple at Orăşani Hermitage from nearby. Then, for he aspired to a higher obedience and ascesis, the young soldier of Christ was tonsured in monasticism, and in the year 1728 he was ordained priest and tonsured as schemamonk. As disciple of Abbot Dositheos, Schemamonk Sila was toiling much, both with officiating the religious service and with providing the hermitage with food and with other necessary things. For 30 years, this tireless hermit was the administrator of the Putna Hermitage, fulfilling that task in the fear of God. This was because the hermitage had not wealth, so that it subsisted by the mercy of the believers. The peasants were sending there: food, clothing, wine, wax, and oil for the church, through the hands of Pious Sila, and the humble hermits from on the mountain were praying for them and for the country, day and night.

After Abbot Dositheos died in the year 1753, Pious Sila was chosen as spiritual father of Putna Hermitage. He entirely renewed that hermitage, he built there a new church ins tone replacing the previous small wooden church, and he built there: monastic cells, a refectory, dungeons, a water pomp, an apples orchard, and he surrounded the place with walls from all quarters. He also adorned the church with an iconostasis, with icons, and with all “the adornments and the needs owed to the house of God”. In the year 1758, the new church placed under the patronage of the Annunciation, it was consecrated by Jacob from Putna, the Metropolitan of Moldavia.

Abbot Sila renewed the spiritual life at the Putna Hermitage, by increasing the number of the humble hermits and by consummating the immortal relationship of love among all of them. Some of those were workers of the *Prayer to Jesus*, while others were industrious calligraphers and book copyists. Among those we are mentioning Hieroschemamonk Natan, who wrote, with the blessing of the Abbot *the Remembrance List of Holy Putna Hermitage* (1769), as also an original work entitled *The Monasticism* (1770). Another hermit from there copied *The Ladder of Saint John of Sinai*, finished at 1st of March 1770, and “the humble among hieromonks Nathanael Dreteanul, the

confessor from Paşcani", who was living in ascesis in that hermitage, he copied again the *Remembrance List of Putna Monastery*, finished in the year 1756.

Pious Sila was also a famous confessor, searched for by many believers from villages, as also by monks, by hermits, by abbots, and by hierarchs. He advised all of them wisely on their path to salvation, neither discouraging them nor allowing them in souly indifference. One of his disciples, Hieromonk Dositheos Herescu, reached in the year 1747 to be abbot of Putna Monastery, and between the years 1750-1789 he was Bishop of Rădăuţi and Metropolitan of Moldavia, and he was the one succeeding in bringing from Poland to Moldavia, in the year 1783, the holy relics of Saint John the New.

In the year 1776, after the Northern Moldavia was occupied by Austrians, Putna Hermitage was asked to pay taxes and they were no longer allowed to receive any help form the country, so that the hermitage was menaced with desertion. Then the old abbot sent a complain to the emperor, asking for tax exemption and defending the former rights of the hermitage. For all of those Hieroschemamonk Sila is reckoned as a great founder of Putna Hermitage[252].

After 70 years of spiritual ascesis in the Putna Hermitage, Pious Sila appointed Hieroschemamonk Natan in his place, and he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the Lord's hands, in the year 1781.

ARCHIMANDRITE BARTHOLOMEW MĂZĂREANUL
Putna Monastery
(1710-1780)

Pious Archimandrite Bartholomew Măzăreanul "was a great spiritual personality of the Romanian monasticism" and the most prolific churchly writer from the Century XVIII[253].

He originated from Cîmpulung-Moldovenesc City, born to a family that sprouted out chosen priests and monks. Thus, his grandfather, called Ioanichie, was a monk at Putna Monastery; his father, at the urge of his son, reached to be, at his turn, a hieromonk called Ghenadius; also, his sister Elena took upon herself the monastic scheme, and his brothers Theodore and Nicholas graduated the school from Putna and they became parishioner priests.

The young Basil was called by Christ, form his childhood, to the spiritual ascesis, in the community of Putna Monastery. He knew Slavonic from his family, and he loved much the quietude, the church, and the reading of the holy books. Here he became disciple and student of Hieromonk Anthony, who

[252] Fr. Dimitrie Ban, *Putna Monastery and Commune*, Bucharest, 1905; Fr. Simion Reli, *From Bucovina of the Hard Times – The Last Hermits of Bucovina*, Chernovtsy, 1926; Abbot Sila, *cited work*; The *Archive* and the *Remembrance List of Putna Hermitage*.

[253] Prof. I. D. Lăudat, "Bartholomew Măzăreanul", in *M.M. Review*, XLII, 1966, no. 7-8, pp. 543-549; Fr. Dimitrie Nan, *Archimandrite Bartholomew Măzăreanul*, Bucharest, 1911; Iden, *Putna Monastery and Commune*, Bucharest, 1905; The *Archive* and the *Remembrance List of Putna Monastery*.

was a famous teacher and adviser of souls. Anthony taught him the good ascesis, the humbleness, the patience, the prayer, and the obedience which form the base itself of the salvation. And the deep of the theology and the teaching of the Holy Fathers were learnt by young Basil in the "small school" that existed in the monastery. Hieromonk Anthony was godfather into monasticism of Monk Barthomomew, tonsuring the young man into the monastic scheme. Then, being him ordained priest, in a short time he became a chosen adviser of souls and a highly-skilled teacher in the school from Putna. Between the years 1740-1757 he was the soul of that school, educating hundreds of young men, both for monasticism and for being priests in villages.

In the year 1750 Protosyncellus Bartholomew reached to be abbot, archimandrite and spiritual father at Putna Monastery, which he guided with much skillfulness until the year 1763. During that period the spiritual life at Putna Monastery experienced a new momentum. He increased the number of the monks and of the confessors, he organized well the church's religious services, he wrote and translated numerous churchly books, he enriched the library with valuable manuscripts, he adorned the voivodal church with new iconostasis and icons, sand he gave a new amplitude to the Hermitage from Putna Valley. Thus, under his leadership, Putna Monastery woke up many souls on the path to salvation and it created an atmosphere of spiritual renewal in Northern Moldavia.

In the year 1757 he undertook a short pilgrimage to the monasteries form Russia and he became honorific member of the Theological Academy from Kiev. Between the years 1774-1776 he visited the monastic schools from Moldoviţa, Voroneţ, Humor, Neamţ, and the Metropolitanate form Iaşi. Then, turned back to Putna Monastery, he founded there, in addition to the so called "small school", the "big school", some sort of Romanian theological academy, unparalleled, at that time, anywhere in Moldavia. There numerous young men were studying the dogmas of the Orthodox faith, the ascesis of the monastic life, the singing of Psalms, the rhetorics, and a foreign language. At that time Archimandrite Bartholomew was called as "supervisor of the voivodal episcopal and monastic schools" from Moldavia. Namely, some kind of spiritual father and supervisor of the churchly and monastic education. That was because he was one of the most taught monks of his time and a pious adviser of souls. Numerous confessors, abbots, hierarchs, and country clerks had his as their adviser and confessor.

Archimandrite Bartholomew Măzăreanul was also an unmatched copyist and translator of patristic and churchly books, as also an author of books. Amont his translations are mentioned: *The Ladder of Saint John Climacus*, translated by him in the year 1766 at the request of Hieromonk Barlaam from Bisericani Monastery; *The Didache*, from Solea Monastery, in the year 1770; *The Teachings of Pious Dorotheos and Ephraem the Syrian*; numerous lives of saints, after Saint Demetrius of Rostov; *Apophthegmata*, namely *Short Rhetorical and Moral Sayings* (1755), and others. Among the books composed by himself we are mentioning here: *The Chronicle Since the Creation of the*

World (some kind of chronographer), *The Chronicle of Moldavia* (1769), *The Book of the Holy Voroneț Monastery* (1775); *The Book of the Holy Humor Monastery* (1776); *The book of the Holy Elijah Monastery from Near Suceava*; *The Book of Preacista Monastery from Roman*; *The Will of Stephen the Great from on 16th of March 1490* etc.

So lived, in ascesis, and sacrificed himself Archimandrite Bartholomew from Putna, for the benefit and fore the salvation of many. Then, he lived a little longer, and he passed away with the hope in the resurrection, in the year 1780, and he was buried at the monastery where he became a monk.

PIOUS ONUPHRIUS THE HERMIT
Vorona Hermitage
(† 1789)

a. His Life

This great hermit was together-living in ascesis and adviser of Abbot Paisius from Neamț Monastery. They were of the same age. In the beginning he lived in ascesis at Vorona Glade Hermitage. Then, he withdrew to quietude in the forests from around Vorona Hermitage, and he reached to be a consummate hermit and he passed away, peacefully, in the summer of the year 1789.

b. Deeds and Useful to the Soul Words

1. Pious Nouphrius, hearing about the great Moldavian hermits from Vorona Glade and forests, and being him called by Christ, he entered the community of that hermitage, where he lived in ascesis, according to the will of God, for more than 25 years. And his ascesis was the total obedience, in silence and in ceaseless prayer. He ate after sunset, and at night he dozed on a chair for two or three hours. And he grew so much in the spiritual life that all benefited from his living and asked him to pray for them.

2. The most exquisite good deed of Pious Onuphrius was the ceaseless prayer, which he learnt consummately in a short time. In the community of the Vorona Glade Hermitage of that time, there was no other monks more skilled at working the *Prayer to Jesus* than humble Schemamonk Onuphrius was. He also gained the gift of the tears, and with the help from Christ he had a great joy and spiritual comforting. But he never told anything about those to anybody.

3. Being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, Pious Onuphrius was a servant of the holy religious services and confessor of several hermits from Vorona forests. And he was wise in word, gentle, and he knew more than anyone else the temptations of the devil. Thus, his name became famous everywhere, and even Abbot Paisius was visiting him every now and then, asking him for useful words.

4. Being entrusted by some godlike signs, in the year 1764 Pious Onuphrius withdrew himself in wilderness, in the ancestral forests from round Vorona Hermitage. There, he dug up a monastic cell in the ground and covered it with a wooden roof, and there he lives in unknown ascesis, for 25 years, reaching to be miracles-worker and fore-knower. Then, after finishing his trip in this world, he gave his blessed soul in the arms of Christ and he was buried next to his monastic cell in the orchard, under an apple-tree.

5. Once, while hunting in Vorona forests, a boyar from the country's council, who had a daughter suffering of epilepsy, he reached to the monastic cell of the great Hermit Onuphrius. So, being thirsty, he took a few apples fallen on the tomb of the Pious. When his daughter ate from those apples at home, she was immediately healed of her illness. Other ill people too were coming to his tomb and they were healed. For that, the local people were honoring Hermit Onuphrius as a saint.

6. The news reached the Metropolitan and the Voivode of the Country, so that in the year 1846 his holy relics were removed from his tomb and they were placed, in an honorable place, in the altar of Vorona Monastery. And since the year 1856, his holy relics have been kept in the altar of Vorona Hermitage. On the small tabernacle where his holy relics are preserved, it is written:

"1846, May 9th. During the time of Father Rafael as abbot and archimandrite of Vorona Monastery, on the land of this monastery, at one side near to the forest, there has been, for a long time, a hermitage where many monks lived in ascesis, among whom the most importance was our father Onuphrius. In the year 1846, when His Highness Mihail, the lord of the Country visited the monastery – and we don't know how the voivode established with Abbot Rafael – suddenly I received the order that I together with the confessors Gavriil, Irinarchus, and Onesiphorus, accompanied by an old logothete, to secretly go to the mentioned hermitage. Arriving there, we started digging and at a shallow depth we have found the bones. All of them were covered in moss and, after getting them out, at the head of the pious we have found a small stone-slab specifying when the pious died: 57 in tomb. And we brought those bones to the monastery and we were ordered to officiate a religious service for the pious, in front of the voivode, and since then these bones have been kept unburied"[254].

7. During our days, a hierodeacon brought several believers to bow down at Vorona Hermitage. So, wanting to show them the holy relics of Pious Onuphrius, and by grabbing the tabernacle without piousness, the tabernacle shattered and the bones fall down in the altar, because the will of the Pious never was to be praised and seen by people. Since then, nobody has dared to get those bones out of the altar.

All-Pious Father Onuphrius, pray to God for us!

[254] Fr. Al. Simonescu, *The History of Vorona Monastery*, Botoșani, 1922, pp. 24-25.

PIOUS PAISIUS THE GREAT
Great Abbot of Neamț Monastery
(1722-1794)[255]

a. His Life

Pious Paisius form Neamț was one of the greatest abbots had by the Romanian monasticism.

He probably originated form Moldavia, even from Cantemir Family. Because of the Ottoman and Tatar invasions, his grandparents moved to Poltava in Little Russia. The Pious Abbot was born on 21st of December 1722, in Poltava, to very pious parents. His father was priest at the city's cathedral. In that blessed family, Peter was the eleventh child, they being twelve brothers in total. Becoming orphan because his father died, his mother gave him to study at Moghilean Academy from Kiev, in the year 1735. After four years of study, his soul no longer found peace within the world. He felt himself called to monastic ascesis.

In the autumn of the year 1739, when he was only seventeen, he started to search for a monastery and for a good spiritual guide, so necessary to his soul. For 7 years he had wandered between several hermitages and monasteries, among which was Pecersfca Monastery. In the Medvedeschi Monastery he became a rasophore under the name Plato. Because of not finding resting and peace in the Ukrainian monasteries, Rasophore Plato, urged by the Holy Ghost, crossed into Moldavia in the year 1745. There were living in ascesis several monks originating from Little Russia. Plato settled himself down at Tresticni Hermitage – Rîmnicu Sărat. Then he moved to Cîrnu Hermitage, on the other bank of Buzău River, where was also Hermit Onuphsius. In the summer of the year 1746 he left for Athos, and lived there for one year, in loneliness, in the neighborhood of Pantocrator Monastery. In the year 1750, Abbot Basil tonsured Hermit Platon in monasticism, giving him the name Paisius. Starting with that year, the humble Paisius begun receiving disciples, and he was given the administration of Saint Prophet Eloijah Hermitage, he accepted the priesthood, and he live on Athos for seventeen years.

In the summer of the year 1763 Abbot Paisius came to Moldavia together with his 64 disciples and he took over the administration of Dragomirna Monastery. Here he lived for 12 years, until 14th of October 1775, forming there a community counting 350 monks. In the autumn of the year 1775 he came to Secu Monastery, accompanied by 200 monks, and in the year 1779 se moved, for the last time, to the great monastic hearth of Moldavia: Neam Monastery.

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[255] The life, the deeds, and the teaching words of Pious Paisius from Neamț have been extracted from: Schemamonk Platon, *The Life and the Ascesis of Our Blessed Father Paisius*, Publishing House of Neamț Monastery, 1836 (reedited in the year 1935); S. Cetferiov, *Paisius, the Abbot of Neamț Monastery*, Publishing House of Neamț Monastery, 1940; Deacon P. I. David, "Pious Paisius the Great (Velichkovsky), a Consummate Romanian Monk", in *B.O.R. Review*, year XCIII, no. 1-2, pp. 162-191; Deacon I. Ivan and Fr. Prof. S. Porcescu, *Neam Monastery*, 1981.

At Neamț Monastery Pious Paisius lived his last but the most fruitful years of his life. There he translated numerous works of the Holy Fathers, he organized the community according to the rule of the Holy Mountain, and he formed there a very large community, counting almost a thousand monks, he taught disciples how to practice the *Prayer to Jesus*, and he had spiritual relationships with many monasteries, confessors, hermits, bishops, and state-clerks.

On 15th of November 1794, on a Wednesday, at Vespers, the Great Abbot of Neamț Monastery, Pious Paisius, also called as "the Great" – Velichkovsky -, moved to the eternal resting, aged 72, and he was buried in the crypt of the voivodal church, as one can see even today. For the holiness of his life, the Romanian Orthodox Church counted him among the saints and he is remembered on 15th of November, each year.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. While Rasophore Paisius was living in ascesis at Trestieni Hermitage, the abbot appointed him to the kitchen. But because he didn't know how to cook and because of having a weak body, one day he didn't boil the food enough; and when he wanted to take the vessels form the fire, he mistakenly spilled the whole food, and for that he cries a lot, asking for forgiveness. On a different day he was appointed to make bread in the bakery, but there too he experienced the same temptation. That was because of not knowing how to prepare the dough and because of not being able to knead the dough as much as needed, so that the dough didn't rise. Then, when a brother came to his help, they kneaded that dough again; but in the oven, because of not knowing how to control the fire, the whole bread was burnt on the hearth. Then, the rasophore Plato, asking for forgiveness, in his knees, from the fathers, he cried with upset for that entire day.

2. Later on, after Plato reached to be monk and abbot at Neamț Monastery, he was telling to his disciples:

- My sons, let the newcomers not to be discouraged because of seeing their lack of skills in accomplishing certain tasks, because myself I was alike. But let them be patient for, by the help of God and with their zeal, they will reach succeeding anything.

3. A schemamonk called Dositheos told to Rasophore Plato that, in a few days, the Great Abbot Basil followed to come from Poiana Mărului to Trestieni Hermitage, and if he had seen Platon so young and smart, Basil was going to force Plato to accept the priesthood. Then Plato, thanking him, told to him:

- Father Dositheos, I would want to remain, until my death a simple monk, because I am not worthy of such a high level.

- May God help you, brother! Added the old man.

4. In an autumn, the abbot of the hermitage appointed Plato to guard the vineyard, commanding him not to eat grapes but after dinner, so that not to get

sick in his stomach. But the disciple, being defeated by his covetousness, he was eating grapes for the whole day and at dinner he didn't eat anything. That's why, he lost a lost of wight as because of a sickness, and he was rebuked by the abbot. Then, Plato admitted his mistake of disobedience and he asks for forgiveness, with tears.

5. The fathers from the hermitages were saying about Plato this worthy to be known things too: at one night, towards Sunday, Plato slept to deeply that he didn't hear the bell calling for Matins. When he woke up the religious service was at its half. Then, because of his great sadness, he started crying and turned back to his monastic cell. And on the next day he was too ashamed to attend the Liturgy and the refectory with the other brothers, and he sat in his monastic cell crying, because he was so deeply pricked by the fear of God. Since that day, Rasophore Plato stopped sleeping lied down in a bed, and he only slept on a little chair, in order him to be able to wake up for Matins.

6. The humble Plato was living in ascesis at Cîrnu Hermitage, and there he often went to the forest, to see Pious Onuphrius, a chosen and full of grace man, in order him to ask him for useful words. Once, after the old man talked to him about the bodily and spiritual passions and about the cunning fights from the devil, he finally added these words too:

- If Christ didn't defend His people, no one among the saints would be saved. But he who falls towards Christ with faith and with love, with humbleness and with tears, to that one will be given comforting and untold joys, peace and fiery love towards God. Witnesses for this thing are the unhypocritical tears sprung out of the great love, out of the crushing of the heart, and out of ceaseless humbleness for Christ. This is for out of the love towards God the man becomes insensitive towards the goods of this world.

7. After four years of spiritual ascesis in Moldavia, Rasophore Plato left for the Holy Mountain, in order him to escape from being ordained, as himself confessed later on: "lest the Moldavian fathers force him to accept the priesthood".

8. After arriving to Mount Athos, Plato wandered to all hermitages and monasteries in order to find a skilled adviser. But because he didn't find a spiritual adviser according to his desire, he withdrew himself into wilderness where he lived in ascesis, alone, for four years, in deep ascesis and toils, in prayer and in reading the Holy Fathers, in tears, and in vigil day and night.

9. The deep ascesis adopted by the Blessed Platon in loneliness was quite hard and difficult. He was ceaselessly reading the Holy Scripture and singing the Psalms. He ate only once in two days and then only dry bread and water, except on Saturdays, on Sundays, and of feast days. And his poverty was overwhelming. He lived only on alms. He had only a thick cloak and a monastic coat, those too being very worn. Often, because of lacking the necessary means, he walked barefoot and shirtless even during winter. But humble Plato enjoyed his poverty like a rich man enjoys his wealth. He never locked the door of his monastic cell when he went somewhere, because of not having anything

in it, except the words of the Holy Fathers which he borrowed from monasteries.

10. At that time, with the care of God, the Great Abbot Basil from Poiana Mărului came to the Holy Mountain and he tarried, for a few days, at the monastic cell of Blessed Plato. And at his ask, Abbot Basil tonsured Plato in monasticism, calling him *Paisius*. Then, the old man advised his disciples to leave the hermit-like ascesis and to choose the imperial path, telling him:

- The whole monastic life is divided in three parts: the first part is the living in community; the second part if the living together with two or three other brothers, called also the imperial path of the middle path, having everything in common; the third part if living alone, in wilderness, and it fits only the holy and consummate men.

But in the present time some monks contrived also the fourth sort of monastic rule. Each one builds his own monastic cell wherever he likes to, he lives alone and he leads himself according to his will. These ones aren't true hermits, but they are arbitrary, because of choosing a way of life that is not according to their powers, and because of rejecting the obedience in community.

Some of those say: "I live by myself in order not to bother my brother, neither I to be bothered by another. Then, in order to avoid the vain-speaking and the condemnation of another". But you know, my friend, that all these words of yours rather shame you than justify you? This is for also the Church's Fathers said that to the young ones is beneficial they to obey, while the pride, the self-appreciation, the cunningness, and others alike, they make one vain-glorious and haughty.

11. Also, Pious Basil told to his disciple Paisius:

- It is better you to live together with a brother, and to know your weakness and your measure, and you to repent, and you to pray before the Lord, and to clean yourself up daily, by the grace of Christ, than you to bear your pride and your self-appreciation within yourself, and you to hide them cunningly and you to nourish yourself with the lonely life. This is because the lonely living brings much harm to the passionate one.

12. Abbot Basil also added:

- The untimely hermit-like life is cause for pride, according to the saying of Saint Barsanuphius. So, if the weak one is lead by hermit-like life to pride, then what will be the things which him who dares to take upon himself such a lonely fight is based on? Isn't better to keep the silence for two or for three years on the imperial path?

13. Living in community, according to the Lord's commandment, said the great abbot, it will give to the monk zeal to everything, though satan resists the monks. There have not place the love for the self and the bias, which, usually, they dominate those who live in loneliness

14. To those who lived on their own in the beginning, the life in community seems to be difficult. That's why some of them say: the work for

ourselves gave us zeal and industriousness; but when we work for our brothers, it immediately occurs the laziness and the speaking-against.

15. Abbot Basil also said:

- He who lives lonely, he will work only for himself, out of self-love. And he who lives in community works only for the Lord, out of love for God. That's why, we too owe, we the helpless ones, to keep the imperial path, by living several of us together. Thus, we will defeat the temptations and we will be delivered from the sin of the self-love.

16. When Blessed Paisius started accepting several brothers around himself, after he was advised to do so by Abbot Paisius, they bigly missed a priest. So, the brothers begged Paisius, with tears in their eyes, to accept the priesthood, but he didn't want because of reckoning himself as unworthy.

Then, some of the old men from Mount Athos told to the pious:

- How can you teach the brothers to obey and to cut off their own will, while you do not obey and you reject the tears of so many people? That proved that you love you own will and you believe to your mind more than the words of those who are older than you in years and at their mind. Don't you know where the disobedience leads to?

Hearing those words, Paisius obeyed the will of the fathers and he received the priesthood.

17. They say about the community of Pious Paisius from Saint Elijah Hermitage that they lived in big material needs, but in consummate harmony and spiritual zeal. In addition to daily participation to the religious services, the brotherhood occupied themselves also with the manual labor, in full harmony, humbleness, and silence.

18. They say about the blessed abbot that himself toiled too, during the day to carve wooden spoons, and at night reading and copying the books of the Holy Fathers, sacrificing for sleeping only up to three hours.

19. His disciples said that during his whole life, Pious Paisius had been shedding many tears when officiating the Holy Liturgy, being him penetrated by the godlike love.

20. Patriarch Seraphim, who was living at Pantocrator Monastery, he was summoning Abbot Paisius, for a few times a year, for officiating the Holy Liturgy. And all of them benefited seeing Paisius serving in Greek, without hurry, with untold awe, with his face wet with tears, and totally absorbed by the holy religious service.

21. Abbot Paisius very loved much reading the works of the Holy Fathers. Lo what he answered to Abbot Athanasius who blamed him for certain things.

- Do not say, Father Athanasius, that one or two books are enough for soul's salvation. Neither the bee gathers honey from only one flower, but form many. He who reads the books of the Holy Fathers is likewise. One teaches him about faith; another speaks to him about silence and prayer; another tells to him about obedience, about humbleness, and about patience, while another urge him towards the love for God and for his neighbor. Therefore, out of many patristic books the man learns how to live according to the *Gospel*.

22. Pious Paisius said:

- He who wants to suffer together with Christ in the community life and he dares into his pride to suddenly climb the cross of Christ, by choosing untimely for himself the hermit-like life, he will become a mutineer and not a hermit.

23. He also said:

- The life in community and the holy obedience in the community, it is the root of the monastic life that has been place on earth by Christ the Savior Himself, as he exemplified it to the people, during His life and His twelve disciple's life on earth, for His disciples totally obeyed His godlike commandments.

24. No other way of living, the Pious said, it brings to the monk so much progress and it delivers him so soon of his bodily and souly passions, as the life in community through the blessed obedience. And that is due to the humbleness that is born out of obedience.

25. And about the spiritual love he also said:

- Living into community of the brother gathered in the name of Christ, regardless their nationality and origin, it united them so much through love, than, by all of them becoming a sole body, having a sole head – Christ -, they will become a sole soul, a sole will, and a sole purpose – guarding the commandments of God -, urging one another to the good fight, obeying to one another, bearing the burdens to one another, being father and disciple to one another.

26. The Abbot also said:

- The godlike obedience, being the root and the foundation of the monastic life, it is tightly connected to the life in community, as the soul is tied to the body. This is because one cannot exist without another.

27. In our community, said Pious Paisius, nobody has anything as its own, because all of us are convinced that the greediness is the path of Juda the traitor. He who enters the monastery owes to place the whole his wealth to the feet of the abbot, down to the smallest thing he possesses, and to bestow himself to God, until his death, with his body and with his soul.

28. He then added these:

- Rightly so, not everybody in our community has equally reached the measure of the spiritual age. Most of them have totally rejected their will and their thought, and they submitted themselves in everything to the brothers, and they endure with great joy the rebukes and the temptations. They are ceaselessly dominated by the self-rebuking, and they reckon themselves more worthless than anyone else.

Others, and they are not few, they fall and they rise again; they mistake and they repent; they endure the rebukes and the temptations with difficulty, but they do not remain as they were, but they pray God warmly to send them help. But there are also a few of those who cannot endure at all the temptations and the rebukes. These ones need to be nourished with the milk of

the mercy, of the love for people, and of the lenience, until they will reach the due spiritual age.

29. And Pious Paisius told to one of his friends these words:

- I have a ceaseless sadness and a pain in my heart. What face I will present myself in front of the fearsome Judge, to be held accountable for so many souls of my brothers who have surrendered themselves to my leadership, while I am not able to give account even for my wicked soul? But, despite I am unworthy, I hope that I will be saved by the prayers of the brothers living together with me.

30. After the move of Abbot Paisius with his community, from Mount Athos to Dragomirna Monastery, he ordered, with the blessing of Metropolitan Gavriil of Moldavia, the following rules of monastic life:

- No brother in this community will have any sort of own wealth, moving or unmoving. The monastery's abbot will take care of giving each one what he needs, according to his tasks.

- Each brother will strive to achieve the consummate obedience, by totally living his own will, his cogitation, and his freedom.

- The abbot will know well the Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Holy Fathers in order him to known how to advise the monks according to the will of God.

- The churchly religious services and the entire canon will be observed identically to the typicon form Mount Athos.

- The abbot and all the brothers owe to daily attend the religious services dressed up in monastic vestments.

- At refectory the meals will be served only according to the churchly typicon and according to the rules from the Mount Athos. No one is allowed to eat in his monastic cell, starting with the abbot and ending with the last brother. Only the ill ones and the ill ones can receive their food at their monastic cell.

- At the monastic cells the brothers owe, more than any other ascesis, to practice the *Prayer to Jesus*, and then to sing psalms, to read the Holy Scripture sand the books of the Holy Fathers. Let no one stay without an occupation in his monastic cell. And anyone must run away like from a snake from often exiting his monastic cell and from talking to others.

- The abbot owes to appoint the brothers to any task within monastery, in order to accustom them to humbleness and to cutting off their own will.

- The abbot owes to equally take care of all the brothers and with the same love. Likewise, the brothers owe to have among themselves clean and unhypocritical love.

- The abbot owes to endure with gentleness all the weaknesses of his spiritual sons, with the hope in straightening them. And they who live by themselves and who reject the yoke of the obedience even after much advising, let him remove those form the monastery.

- For the good management of the wealth, of the brothers, and of the monastic businesses, the abbot owes to have a skilled monk able to lead all the things well.

- The brothers coming to become monks must be kept in lay clothes, towards canonical temptation, between six months and three years. Then they will be tonsured as rasophore, or monk in mantle. And he who even after three years won't have learnt the obedience and the cutting off of his will, let him be sent back into the world.

- In monastery there must be a small hospital – or infirmary – for the monks who get ill and a skilled brother who to take care of the sick providing them special food, drink, and peace.

- In monastery must be diverse workshops for community's needs, where skilled monks will work, so that there will be no need for the monks to go to laymen.

- There must be built two guest houses: one inside the monastery for the pious laymen coming to worship; and one outside the monastery for the people coming with their carriages.

- The abbot must appoint skilled monks who to serve, with love, the people coming to worship. The poor and the sick who have no place where to stay, let him bring them either to the guest-house, or to the infirmary, where they must be cared with benevolence.

- The entrance of the women in the monastery will be forbidden, except in cases of a great need, as there would be war or refuge.

- The abbot will be chosen by the community of the monks and only from within monastery. He must know well the Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Holy Fathers and he must be an example of obedience, of love, of gentleness, and of wisdom, to everybody.

- Dragomirna Monastery will never be subordinate to anyone, as it ordered, with a heavy covenant, it all-blessed founder Metropolitan Athanasius Crimca.

31. Pious Paisius was commanding to the brothers to accomplish the appointed task with great love, in permanent silence, and accompanying it with their secret prayer within heart.

32. In the summer, when the parents went to work the field, a confessor accompanied them for the churchly rule and for their daily confession which no one was exempted form.

33. When Abot Paisius couldn't visit his brother in the field, because of being far from monastery, he sent them letters full of spiritual advices. Lo how he was teaching them in one of those letters:

- My sons, guard yourselves against envy! There where is envy, there won't be the Ghost of God. Control your tongue in order not to utter vain words. he who controls his tongue he will guard his soul against sadness. From tongue comes life and death. Have in all things: humbleness, kindness, and love; strengthen yourselves with the fear of God, with remembering your death and the eternal torments. Repeat, ceaselessly, the *Prayer to Jesus*. Bring to God

clean sacrifice, unblemished, with good fragrance, according to your Christian promise. Bring your sweat and your blood as a burnt offering. Let the heat of the day be for you as the patience to the martyrs…

34. At the monastic cells, Abbot Paisius asked the monks to do three things: to read the words of the Holy Fathers, to practice the *Prayer of the Mind*, and to do numerous prostrations accompanied by tears.

35. Confessing the thoughts to the confessors was reckoned by the great abbot as the foundation of the spiritual life and the hope for salvation of everybody. That's why he ordered to the brothers, especially to the beginners, to confess, on each evening, to their confessors.

36. If one of the monks, because of the work of the enemy, hadn't wanted to forgive his brother until evening, the abbot removed him from community and forbad him form uttering *Our Father* and didn't even allow him from stepping on the church's threshold, until that brother humbled himself and asked for forgiveness.

37. If while committing something some commandment had been transgressed, the abbot commanded that thing to be left rather than to upset God in anything.

38. They said about Abbot Paisius that he was permanently occupied with the brotherhood and the door of his monastic cell was open until nine in the evening. Some brothers entered while some others left. He comforted some of them, and he rejoiced with some others.

39. One of his disciples said: "I lived near him for thirty years and I have never seen him getting sad for material needs. He was very sad only when seeing being transgressed any of the godlike commandments, especially when that had been done willingly. This was for he put his soul for the smallest commandment of the Master". The abbot often said:

- Let all our things to perish, let our body to perish, but let's keep the commandments of God and our souls with those!

40. For twelve years as he lived at Dragomirna Monastery, Abbot Paisius occupied himself, in addition to taking care of leading the community, also with translating patristic books. The Pious had this occupation expe3cially during the long winter nights, and she shared the fruits of that occupation, joyfully, to all the brothers from the monastery.

41. They say about Abbot Paisius that in winter, when all brotherhood had gathered in monastery form their tasks, on each evening, except on feast days, he read them form the word of the Holy Fathers. The brothers gathered to refectory, they lit up candles, and then the abbot came and sat in his place and read teaching words. At the end he explained the read word so that anybody could understand it.

42. They also said about him that he had at Dragomirna monks belonging to three nationalities: Moldavians, Slavs, and Greeks. That's why he one evening read in Romanian, the next evening he read in Slavonic, and the following evening he read in Greek. These readings frog the patristic thesaurus

took place since the beginning of the fasting of the Christmas until the Sunday of Lazarus, when they stopped.

43. The abbot often advised the monk, telling to them:

- Brothers, first of all you owe to come close to the lord with strong faith and with fiery love and you to assertively reject all the pleasures of this age, and your will, and the thought of your heart, and you to be poor in spirit and with your body. Only then, by the grace of Christ, the holy zeal will be lit within you.

44. On some other occasion the Pious said:

- According to the measure of your toils, in time, you will achieve tears and crying with hope, towards the comforting of your soul. There will occur within you a hot zeal for living according to the commandments of the Lord and you will gain humbleness and patience, mercy on and love for everybody, especially on the people whom injustice has been done to, in sick people, and on old people.

45. Then he added these words too:

- Brothers, in addition to all of these, you owe to manly endure all sorts of bodily humiliations: weaknesses, heavy illnesses, and passing sufferings, which are for the salvation of your souls. Only thus you will reach to be consummate men, according to eth measure of the age of Christ.

46. The great abbot also told to his disciples:

- If you remain strong in the monastic toils, your community will also last as long as God will want. And if you deviate from taking heed at yourselves and from reading the books of the Holy Fathers, then you will fall off the peace of Christ, off His love, and off fulfilling His commandments, then will nest among you the disorder, the vanity, the souly disturbance, the doubt, the despair, the speaking-against, and the blaming on one another. Then your community will disintegrate, firstly souly and then bodily.

47. The disciple of Abbot Paisius said that Abbot Paisius had such a great persuasion gift, that he could comfort even the saddest monk with his words, and he could encourage and strengthen even the most discouraged one. And if needed, he rebuked, the prayed, he removed, he long-suffered, and when he hadn't succeeded, he banished from himself.

He rebuked only the worsened and the stubborn, menacing them with the anger of God. To some like that he showed himself being a harsh and angry judge, until that one humbled himself and repented. Then he comforted that one, rebuking him with love and with tears for his correction.

48. Once, one of the brothers asked him a question:

- Father, my thought tells to me that you hate me, because you often angrily rebuke me in front of the brothers.

- My beloved brother, the Pious answered him, if the Holy Gospel commands to us to love even our enemies and to do good to them, then how can I hate my spiritual sons? And if I rebuke you angrily, may the Lord give you too this sort of anger! This is because I am forced to stay against everybody's nature. Against some ones, namely, I must show myself getting

angry, before others I must cry, so that by both those actions I to being benefit to you.

49. Sometimes he spoke to his disciples these words:

- Brothers, I don't want you to fear me as a fearsome master, but I want you to love me as a father, as I too love you like some spiritual sons of mine.

50. They also said about Great Abbot Paisius that if there had happened disturbance within community and disgust to some brother, and that brother had come to the Pious to tell to him his trouble, the Abbot blessed him and changed the subject so that he didn't allow that brother to speak. Thus, by his sweet and comforting words he took the brother's mind far from sadness. Also, in his speaking, he always took in account the nature and the souly settlement of each one. To the wiser he brought a word from the godlike Scripture, according to that one's state. And to the simpler he brough a word either from his skillfulness or from the holy obedience, until that brother forgot about his disturbance and departed rejoicing and thanking to God.

51. On some other occasions the Abbot uttered also these:

- When I see my spiritual sons living in ascesis and forcing themselves to keep God's commandments in obedience and in humbleness, I have within my soul such a great spiritual joy than not even in the Kingdom of Heavens I want to have a greater joy than this. And when I see some of them not taking care of fulfilling the commandments of God, because they keep their own will, overlooking the holy obedience, speaking against and living in laziness and in love for the self, then so much sadness engulfs my soul that there cannot be a bigger one than this, until I will see them truly repenting themselves.

52. They said about Abbot Paisius that he was ceaselessly teaching the brothers and he was waking them up towards greater zeal, by telling to them:

- My sons, do not renounce, by making of your salvation a commerce! This is for now it is the well-received time, now it is the day of the salvation, as Saint Paul says.

53. Once, a brother came to the Abbot and told to him:

- Father, I am strongly fought by thoughts!

And the Abbot told him, smiling:

- Why are you so childish? You too need to do like I do. I talk to you for the whole day; I cry with some of you, while I rejoice with others. And after all of you leave my monastic cell, together with you I will banish away from me all the thoughts. Then I took a book in my hands and I no longer hear anything, as I would be in River Jordan's Desert.

54. About the growth of the spiritual life and of the community of Pious Paisius, his disciple Plato wrote later on, these words:

- You could see at that time, at Dragomirna Monastery, flourishing the monastic life as a new miracle. This was for the people, alive for the love for God, they were willingly dead to the earthly things. And how could I speak with understanding but only partially, about their mysterious work, namely: the crushing of the heart, deep humbleness, the fear of God, the taking heed at oneself, the silence of the thoughts, and the prayer of the heart incessantly

jumping, with untold and fiery love for Christ and for the neighbor. So that to many of them their tears were flowing down ceaselessly, and not only in their monastic cells but even in the church, and during accomplishing their tasks, and during the reading of the spiritual speaking, as a fruit of the Holy Ghost. With decency, therefore, there were being accomplished the words of Saint Isaac the Syrian who says: "The gathering of the humble ones is loved by God, as the gathering of the seraphs".

55. As for defending the *Prayer to Jesus*, which all the disciples of Abbot Paisius uttered incessantly, the Pious wrote a very beautiful epistle in six chapters, against those who were defaming that. Lo the beginning of his epistle:

- It has reached us the news that some persons from among monks, founding themselves only on the sand of their wisdom, they dare to blaspheme the godlike *Prayer to Jesus*, which officiates the holy religious service through mind within heart. To that the enemy arms them so that through their tongues, as through some weapons, they do make this godlike vain and by the blindness of the mind and to darken their heart.

56. Further on, he added:

- It is a known fact that this godlike work was the incessant occupation of the bearers-of God our fathers form old, and it shone in many desert places and in the monasteries with community life: on Mount Sinai, in Egypt's Scetis, on Nitria Mountain, in Jerusalem, on Holy Mountain Athos, and all over the East. Through this work many of the bearers-of God our fathers, being lit up with the seraphic fire of the love for God and for the neighbor, they became zealous defenders of the commandments of God and they were found worthy of becoming chosen vessels of the Holy Ghost.

57. In continuation, Abbot Paisius said:

- Upon this godlike work of the mind and of preserving the heart's Paradise, nobody among Orthodox has dared to utter any blasphemy, but all of them approached it with great respect and awe, as to a thing full of great spiritual benefit.

58. And to those who resisted it, the Pious addressed them these words

- Do you see, oh, my friends who dare to blaspheme the *Prayer of the Mind*? Aren't you becoming partakers to the heretic Barlaam of Calabria and to his disciples? Don't you feel your soul shaken because you are going to fall, like they did, under the anathema of the church and you are going to be removed from God? Does it seem to you useless calling the name of Jesus? So, neither will you be saved by anyone else but in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

59. Then he added, saying:

- If the calling of the name of Jesus is savior, and the man's mind and heart are creatures of the hand of God, then what is the sin of that man who form the deep of his heart raises his mind with the all-sweet *Prayer to Jesus* and asks mercy form Him?

60. To them who wanted to learn the *Prayer to Jesus*, the Abbot Paisius told:

- If somebody dares to practice this prayer according to his knowledge and not according to the rules established by the Holy Fathers, and without asking for advice from the skilled ones, because of being him proud, passionate, and helpless, living without obedience and submission, and even bn living a lonely life into wilderness, that one, truly so, I too say, he will easily fall into all the devil's traps.

61. The Pious often said these too:

- The Holy Fathers call this godlike prayer as art, for, as the art cannot be learnt by people on their own, without a teacher, likewise is impossible to learn the *Prayer to Jesus* without a skilled adviser.

62. And to those who cannot find skilled advisers, the Great Abbot told:

- If somebody lived under obedience, but he doesn't find in his father a skilled adviser with the deed and with the experience in this godlike work, because during these days there is a big lack of skilled advisers in the *Prayer to Jesus*, let him not fall into despair. But, while continuing to remain under obedience, let him run to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, in the stead of his spiritual father, and let him learn this prayer form them.

63. And he also said:

- Only that one won't feel the fiery love for getting accustomed to the *Prayer of the Mind*, who is engulfed by passionate thoughts for this life and who is tied with the bonds of the care for his body, which takes many far from the Kingdom of God.

64. Then he adds also these:

- He who wants to be united through love with the all-sweet Jesus, by rejecting all the world's beauties and delectations, as also the bodily resting, he won't desire to have in the present life anything else but to incessantly occupy himself with the doing of this prayer from Paradise.

65. Abbot Paisius was very merciful. During the invasion of Bucovina by the foreign armies, thousands of peasants sook for refuge in the forests from around Dragomirna Monastery. During winter, the Pious moved the monks in one half of the monastery, and he put the other half at the disposition of the poor laymen, of the old people, and of the mothers with children. Then he ordered to t monks who were tasked with the food management, to give food to anyone who asked for it. There was incessantly cooking food and making bread. Thus, Abbot Paisius became father of everybody, saving many people form death.

66. After Abbot Paisuius moved to Secu Monastery, he often wrote teaching words to his disciples who remained at Dragormina Monastery. Lo how he was advising his spiritual sons:

- Be always awake and permanently set a beginning of repentance. Run away from the vain-speaking which kills the soul; do not walk from monastic cell to monastic cell, without the approval of your confessors; regularly confess your sins, for by confessing them all devil's temptation will be scattered away. Then, read the writing of the Holy Fathers which the human mind is enlightened by, and which the zeal for the Lord's commandments increases

through. This is because of being the salvation impossible only by faith alone and without deeds.

Let each of you, according to his power, to be partaker to work in the community life. Do not gather yourself at the monastery's gate for speaking vanities. There where is zeal, there the light will shine, there the peace will occur, there satan won't find a place, and from there the passions will run away. And there where isn't zeal, there all things will stay against: instead of good there will be evil; instead of light there will be darkness; instead of Christ there will enter the devil.

67. They said about Abbot Paisius that he daily received monks to his monastic cell, at any hour, in order they to unveil their spiritual and bodily needs. On that occasion the Abot told them:

- If somebody among you have a souly or bodily need and because of that he speaks against and he is upset, but he doesn't come to announce me, I won't be accountable in front of God for his need and suffering.

68. They also said about the Great Abbot that, while at Neamţ Monastery, his scholar occupations reached their peak flourishment. There he founded a real school for educating proofers and translators of books. The patristic manuscripts filled up the library of Neamţ Monastery, and they spread also to numerous monasteries in the country and from abroad. "Thus, Neamţ Monastery became the center and the torch of the Orthodox monasticism and the school of the hermit-like life and of the spiritual culture for the whole Orthodox Orient".

69. The Pious took a special care for the ill ones. In Neamţ Monastery he built a hospital for ill people and guest-houses. The Abbot appointed the old ones and the ill ones into the hospital, entrusting them to Brother Onosius, the nurse of the monastery. He asked the caregivers to serve the ill ones as to God, to give them the best possible food, white bread and wine, and to wash them up weekly, and to maintain an exemplary cleanness in that hospital. The Abbot admitted to that hospital also laymen suffering of diverse illnesses, and who had not place where to lie their head down. For those ones there were reserved special monastic cells, "they were fed from the common meal, and they lived there as long as they wanted, some of them even until their death".

70. Once the Abbot saw a brother walking through the monastery, moving agitatedly his hands and looking all over the place. Then, the Pious called that brother's confessor to him and told to him:

- This is how you are advising your disciples? Because lo, he walks around disorderly, and he offends the brothers! Then he gave them penance to do prostrations for three days, in the refectory, so that all of them to learn out of their mistake.

71. His disciples said that they often saw Pious Paisius sitting, with pain in heart, for the whole night, next to the bed of the very ill ones. He was suffering together with them, he was sobbing together with them, and he was

comforting them with the hope of the healing and of the salvation, so that he was giving them a little alleviation in their bitter pain.

72. They also said about Abbot Paisius that once a year, between the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of the lord and 30th of August, he went to Secu Monastery where there were living in ascesis around one hundred monks. There he spent around two weeks, he held teaching speeches in the church, he comforted the brothers, and after the celebration of that monastery's patronage, namely the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, the Pious blessed all of them and accompanied by sound of the bells he turned back to Neamţ Monastery where the community was waiting for him.

73. Lo how a traveler monk, Theophanous, described the spiritual life from Neamţ Monastery:

- Their willing poverty is consummate. Within their monastic cells, except icons, book, and tools for manual labor, there was nothing else. The monks were distinguished especially by humbleness, and they were totally running away from pride. They do not know about hatred and envy. If another got upset, they immediately hurried to reconcile him. He who didn't want to forgive his brother who wronged him, that one was banished away from that monastery. The walking stance of the monks was a humble one. When encountering, each of them strived to be the first bowing down before others. Within church each of them was staying at the place decided for him. The vain-speaking was totally forbidden, in the monastic cells and in the church, and also outside.

74. The same Monk Theophanus wrote also about the tasks of the monks from Neamţ Monastery:

- In the community of Neamţ Monastery lived around 800 monks and when they gathered to do some job, they were a hundred of a hundred and fisty brothers, and then one of them read a useful-word from some book or he held to them some building-of-souls speech. If somebody started to talk vain things, he would be immediately stopped from doing that.

75. And about the living of the monks in their monastic cells the same Theophanous wrote:

- Within their monastic cells soke of the monks were copying books, others were knitting, others spun wool, others were sewing vestments, other were doing prostrations, others were weaving fabrics for monastic vestments, others were crafting crosses and spoons or they were occupying themselves with other sorts of handcrafting. All of them were under the supervision of the confessors, whom they were confessing their sins and thoughts to, twice a day: in the morning they were saying the things they have done at night, and in the evening the things they have done during that day. Without the blessing of the confessor nobody dared to do anything, not even to eat a fruit.

76. There was a custom that, on the celebration day of Neamţ Monastery's patronage, on the Ascent of the Lord, a lot of people came from Moldavia, from The Romanian Country, and from other countries, to attend the

festivities. During those periods Pious Paisius had no rest at all for four days. Since early in the morning to late in the evening his monastic cell's doors were open to everybody, rich or poor. He strived to comfort everyone he saw, as a second Abraham, welcoming them with love and thanking them for enduring the tiredness of the trip. Then, he promised them souly and bodily mercy the Lord and form the Mother of the Lord, he blessed them and sent them to the guest-house.

77. They said about Pious Paisius that he strived very much for translating the Holy Fathers' books form Old Greek to Slavonic and Romanian, in order they to be for the benefit and for the salvation of those who wanted to aspire and to take heed at the teaching of the bearers-of God our Fathers.

78. His disciple Plato said:

- We owe to wonder about how could he copy so may books! This is because he was totally helpless with his body, and he had wounds all over his right side. Even on the bed where he was sleeping, he was surrounded by books: a few lexicons, the Greek and Slavonic Bibles, Greek and Slavonic grammars, the book he was currently translating, and the candle in the middle.

79. Then, his disciple added:

- Oh, dispassionate and holy man! Of, clean soul and united with God! He was totally attached to God, he was totally overflowing himself, with love, towards his neighbor. Due to that, also his word was powerful, working, and full of grace, uprooting the passions and planting the goods within the souls of those who were listening to him with faith and with love.

80. The disciples of Abbot Paisius said that he translated from Slavonic to Romanian several books, as for instance "The Words of Saint Nilus from Sorsca", because there were more numerous Moldavian monks who were translating from Greek, than from Slavonic. From Slavonic were translating only Pious Paisius and Hieromonk Dorotheos, his disciple[256].

In Romanian were translating the most famous Moldavian Hellenists as: Archimandrite Makarius, a great psalms singer, who translated *The Homilies of Saint Makarius*, *The Words of Saint Isaac*, and others; Hieromonk Illarion translated *The Words of Saint Callistos the Katafygiote*, *The Hexaemeron* of Saint Basil the Great, and others; Pious Monk Gerontius, a great Hellenist, he translated five books: *The Small Shop*, *The Kiriacodromion*, the Homilies for all Sundays printed at Bucharest; *The Dogmatics of Saint John Damascene*, printed at Iasi; the *Kecagrarior* of Blessed Augustine, printed at Neamț Monastery, and others.

Pious Hierodeacon Stephan translated *The Lives of the Saints* for the entire year, from Slavonic, printed at Neamț Monastery, between the years 1807-1815. Pious Schemamonk Isaac the Teacher translated form Grek *The*

[256] Abbot Paisius personally translated the 44 patristic manuscripts from Slavonic, and he undertook a vast correspondence. His most precious translation is *The Ascetic Words of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, dating from in the year 1787.

Ladder of Saint John Climacus, and *The Octoechos of the Mother of the Lord*, which were printed at Neamț Monastery. And from Slavonic he translated *The Typicon* (*The Typicon of Saint Sava*) printed at Iasi in the year 1816. Metropolitan Gregory the Teacher, another disciple of Abbot Paisius from Neamț Monastery, he too translat4ed numerous books from Greek, as *The Paterikon* and others, which he printed at Bucharest, after he reached to be Metropolitan of The Romanian country (1823-1834)[257].

81. A Greek pilgrim, Constantine Caragea, reached Neamț Monastery, and he described the face of the Great Abbot Paisius as full of the Holy Ghost, thus:

- For the first time, I saw with my own eyes the embodied and not fake holiness. I was amazed by his face, luminous, pale, without any blood, a big white beard, shining like silver, and the unusual cleanness of his vestments and of his monastic cell. His speaking was gentle and totally sincere. It seems to me that he was a man totally detached from his body.

82. His disciple Plato said about Pious Paisius:

- There was within him a fiery love, with which he loved our Lord from his youth, with the whole his soul. For he loved everybody, he warmed them up with his love and with his zeal. He felt pain for each one. And he was embracing his spiritual sons more than he did to his soul. On every man who came to him, for souly or bodily mercy, he didn't send anyone away empty handed. He never got sad on somebody, even if that one upset him with something.

83. The same disciple continued:

- There were united within him the long-suffering and the gentleness, and one never saw at him the disturbance and the anger, except for the transgressing of the commandment of God. He was rebuking gently, and he was reproaching and teaching with love. He had mercy and he suffered long, with hope in straightening.

84. Also, he was adorned in the usual things, his disciple continued. For his face was white as of the angel of God, his look was smooth, his word was humble and stranger to daring, being totally overflowed towards mercy, for, through his love, he attracted everyone to himself. His mind was always united with God through love, witness to that being his tears.

85. One of the disciples of Pious Paisius said that the Pious achieved the gift of the true prayer, so that his face was getting enlightened and his eyes were shedding many tears due to the fire burning within his heart.

- On one occasion, his disciple added, when we were at Dragomirna, I came to the Great Abbot and, seeing the door of his monastic cell open, I knocked and I got in. It was before Vespers. The father was laid down. His face was lit up like a fire. I said the prayer: "Bless, Father!", but he didn't answer me. I repeated that for the second time. No answer. I was engulfed by fear.

[257] From *A Brief Description of the Life of Our Pious Father Paisius*, Neamț Monastery, 1817, pp. 16-17.

Then I understood that he was kidnapped in prayer[258]. I tarried there for a little longer, then I left the monastic cell and I didn't say to anybody what I saw.

86. Pious Paisius have also some premonitory gifts. Often, he saw a sword hanging by a hair, above the head of Moldavian Voivode Grigorie Ghica. Then, after not so many days, the Turks beheaded the voivode, at the orders of the sultan. And the abbot cried a lot because of that.

87. They also said that the Abbot sighed and cried for a brother from his community, advising that brother towards straightening. But that brother didn't listen to him. Then, after three days, that brother drowned.

88. On other occasion the Abbot prayed a brother not to leave the monastery.

- Brother, the Pious told him, listen to me, because you are not going to see that place where you want to go. Rightly so, the brother didn't listen to him and after four days that brother died on the road.

89. Numerous and full of spiritual wisdom were the letters sent by Abbot Paisius to diverse friends and disciples of his, laymen, priests, monks, and abbots. Look what he wrote to the monks from Robaia-Argeş Hermitage whoa asked him to send them a priest:

- At your request for sending you a priest who to organize your community life, we don't know even what to answer to you. We too are at the beginning and we need advice. I can only answer to you that according to the rules of the Holy Fathers you could yourselves organize your spiritual life. The first requirement is that the abbot to know the Holy Scriptures, so that he will know how to teach his disciples. He must have for everybody an unhypocritical love, and him to be gentle and humble and patient and free of anger and free of love for money and free of pride and free of covetousness and free of all the other passions. And the disciples must be in the hands of their abbot as the clay is in the hands of the potter. They must do nothing without blessing, they must not have anything of their own, but all the things, the books and the bed and the other things, to be distributed by the will of the abbot. Then your hermitage, wherever it is located, not to be subordinated to other monastery, but to be self-led, so that the brothers to be saved through their abbot, and their abbot through the Lord.

90. Also, he wrote to the monks from Poiana Mărului:

- Do not be troubled for the lack of evilness and for the humbleness of Father Alexa, your new abbot. This is for, according to the Holy Fathers, the abbot must be towards the humble brothers, as: gentle, without evilness, peaceful, able to endure any temptation, so that he could give his brothers an example of patience. Do not worry about the fact that he is weak in his body, as long as he is healthy in his ghost and whole to the spiritual cogitation. But you, by knowing the weakness of his nature, do not ask him bodily toils above his powers, but you must spare him, so that he won't lose prematurely his powers, towards the loss of the brothers. It is enough to him to sit more in his

[258] Ecstasy. (E. l. t.'s n.)

monastic cell, taking care of his health, and to read useful-to-soul books, and him to be ready for, at time of need, to give useful advice to the brothers for their salvation. You must humble yourself in front of one another and to obey each other, and you to have the love for Hod among yourselves, and there to be at you a soul and a heart, by the grace of Christ.

91. A certain priest asked Pious Paiuisius:

- Can the priest forgive the sins of one who repents and, for that one's helplessness, to administrate to that one the Holy Mysteries without giving him penance?

- If that one's bodily illness is of such a sort, the Pious answered, so that that one is close to death and he has not time left for doing penance, then even if that one had big sins, but he repented for those sins, the priest can forgive his sins and the priest can impart him with the Holy Mysteries. But if that one can do penance, then the priest won't allow him to be imparted until he will have done his penance, because the penance is the third part of the repentance.

92. Then he added these words as well:

- I am telling to you also this, that I have searched in all the holy cannons, zealously, in order to find some penances without forbidding one from being imparted, but I couldn't find any. But it is awfully fearsome and dreadful the rebuke placed under the priests who dare to impart those who are forbidden, by the holy canons, from being imparted. The Church likens both of those to Judah the traitor.

93. The Great Abbot also said:

- Following to the gentleness of Christ, you must oppose, all the way to blood, to the passion of the anger, and you must be in peace with everybody. This is so necessary that Christ Himself told to His disciples: "Peace be with you!", and "I am giving My peace to you!". There where the peace of Christ is, there will dwell Christ too. And within that soul where there isn't peace, there won't be Christ either.

94. He also said:

- The patience too is so necessary for salvation, that Christ says: "into your patience you will gain your souls". And gaining one's soul is but the salvation of that soul. But you must be patient not only for a certain time, but all the way to your death, for "he who endures to the end, that one will be saved".

95. And about humbleness Pious Paisius said:

- The humbleness is the foundation of all evangelical virtues. The humbleness is so necessary for salvation as the breathing is for the man's life. All the saints got saved on diverse paths, but without humbleness no one go6t saved and no one will be saved. That's why, everyone who wants to be saved, he must reckon himself, wholeheartedly, in front of God, as the last one among people, and he must condemn himself and not others, for each sin of his.

All Pious Father Paisius, pray to God for us!

PIOUS PROCOPIUS (PICU) PĂTRUŢ
Sălişte, Sibiu Country
(1818-1872)[259]

This worthy of being remembered monk was a special missionary and a self-taught Transylvanian writer from Century XIX.

Born at Sălişte – Sibiu, in the year 1818, to rightly-believing parents, he learnt the fear of God, since he was still a child, in the parental house. He learnt how to write and read at the village's school, and he learnt the churchly singing from the priest of the big church from Sălişte, where he entered at the age of 11 as helper to the chaplain. Strongly attracted by the religious life and by the lives of the pious one and of the martyrs, he was watered with a rare piousness form the holy books he could find in the churches and in the houses form his village.

From his youth, he started to write, his first manuscript dating from the year 1837. Searching continuously for perfecting his knowledge, he bought form the shepherds from Sălişte, who were driving their flocks in transhumance, all the most important churchly and moral writings of his time, and he became a remarkable self-thought. Deeply penetrated by the right-faith and having a rare missionary vocation, he describes, in verses which were sang and which he calligraphed and illustrated himself in manuscript volumes, the lives of the most important saints and martyrs, as also the importance and tea meanings of all the feasts of the Orthodox Church.

Craving increasingly more for the love of Christ, the young Oprea became a monk in the year 1849 at Cheia (Vîlcea) Hermitage, taking the name Procopius. Then, he turned back to his natal village, where he lived an exemplary spiritual life of church steward and being a good missionary among his fellow villagers, until he passed away. His main care was that of talking to everybody about Christ, by word, by singing, by his miniatures which he adorned with his writings, and for guiding as many souls as possible on the path to salvation. "He didn't live through church, he lived for the church and for the church's moral ideals, consecrating each moment of his life to serving the Lord, by singing, by composing verses, by painting holy things, by reading churchly, religious, and theological books, by working love-works towards his neighbor. The Romanian churchly literature, I think, it has never had a thirstier reader, interpreter, and follower as Monk Procopius (Picu) Pătruţ was. A true ascetic in the middle of the world, persevering day and night in prayer, in parables, clean at soul, serene at face, and very loving the toiling. The

[259] Onisifor Ghibu, "The Ascetic – Writer Picu Procopius Pătruţ", in *The Romanian Telegraph*er, no. 80, 82, 83, 86 / 1905ş Ibid, "A Rustic Representative of the Romanian Spirituality at the Middle of the Century XIX", in *Graphical Art and Technique*, book, no. 11 / 1940; Octavian O. Ghibu, "The Bibliography of the Work of Picu Pătruţ from Săliştea Sibiu", in *B. O. R.*, no. 3-4 / 1976.

evenings, usually, he spent them among the Christians from his village, who were coming to listen to his advice and for learning the songs from the pew.

In addition to his spiritual and missionary activity, Pious Procopius undertook a vast cultural-religious activity, leaving behind more than 40 works in manuscript, which comprise his poetical, dramaturgical, hymnographic and hymnologist, churchly calligrapher and copyist, works that are partially original and partially taken from other creators. In hundreds of songs, hymns and poems, illustrated with almost 3000 colored miniatures, he left to us a work that is still waiting for being published. His verses are "spontaneous bursts, in shapes of hymns and psalms, of a great and kind soul, of a holy man. Composed in a popular and churchly language, with archaic fragrances, and accompanied by religious melodies fitted by the poet himself, the verses composed by Monk Procopius were embraced by the people with untold love".

In addition to his original work, Monk Procopius transcribed, for himself and for his close friends, works belonging to other authors, and his own works,

(From page no. 447 to page no. 457, in the source text we had, there is a gap.[260])

(…) praying with tears, he got completely healed on 14th of December 1849, and he turned back, healthy, to his monastery[261].

After his healing, he continued his activity as abbot and teacher until the year 1857. Then he withdrew and lived at Pângărați Monastery, as confessor, until the year 1872, when he moved to the eternal life.

METROPOLITAN OF ARDEAL, ANDREI ŞAGUNA (1808-1873)[262]

a. His Life

Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna was the greatest hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church form Transylvania, during the Century XIX.

The great Hierarch was born at Mişcolţ, on 20th of December 1808, to Macedonian-Romanian parents, called Naum and Anastasia. After graduating the Greek-Wallachian School form his natal town, he graduated the high-school and then he studied the law and the philosophy at Budapest, and, finally, he studied the Orthodox Theology at Vršac City, from Serbian Banat.

[260] (E. l. t.'s n.)

[261] Hieromonk Ilarie Lupescu, "Short History of Pângărați Monastery", in *Monastic Life Review*, Iași, 1933, pp. 208-240). To be seen the note from on the icon of Saint Anna – Bistrița Monastery – Neamț.

[262] The life and the activity of Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna are excerpted from: Fr. Prof. Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, Sibiu, 1972; ***, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1957; I. Lupaș, *Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna*, historical monograph, Sibiu, 1911.

In the year 1833 he was tonsured in monasticism at Karlowitz Metropolitanate, under the name Andrei, and he was ordained deacon and then priest. Thus, since his youth, he dedicated his life to Christ. In the year 1842 he reached to be professor at the Theological Seminary from Vršac City, and then he became Abbot to the Hopovo and Covil Serbian Monasteries. In the year 1846 he was appointed general vicar of the Sibiu Bishopric, and in April 1848he was elected and ordained Bishop of Ardeal. After 16 years of fruitful churchly, cultural and national activity, in the year 1864, Bishop Andrei Şaguna reached to be Metropolitan of Ardeal and spiritual father to all the Romanians from over the Carpathian Mountains, whom he shepherded for nine years.

In the year 1873 he yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord, and he was buried next to the church from Răşinari Commune – Sibiu.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. When he was vicar, Archimandrite Andrei Şaguna started his activity as shepherd by urging the priests to have a moral life and to shepherd well the flock of Christ. Lo his first pieces of advice addressed to the priests from Transylvania:

- Each priest must wear his cassock, not only when he needs to officiate some religious service, but also when he comes to the city, or when he goes to see his superiors;
- Let no priest dare to shave his beard, and let any priest comb his hair towards the back of his head;
- Let any priest abstain himself from gambling and from visiting the pubs and from any words which are harmful to the priestly rank;
- Let any priest totally cease doing commerce or any other way of earning;
- In order each priest to be able to fulfill his duties as due, let each of them read the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers. Let them read and learn the catechism by heart and, by earning useful knowledge, they to be able to hold persuasive and useful speeches towards the people, in order to show to the people the path to good deeds, and in order to do that the priests owe to have a undefiled life, a good behavior in everything and everywhere, as a resounding trumpet, so that to wake everybody up towards the true Christian piousness and towards the fear of God.

2. In *Epistle of Teaching towards the Parishioner Priests*, he also taught, saying:

- Let each priest strive to guide the people to leave the bad habits, to not wed during fasting, to not allow the marriages between relatives, and to avoid wasting money, food, and drink, as the people usually do on the occasions of marriages.

3. Then, he also said these:

- Let the priest not be absent from teaching, not only the young students form schools, but also on them who have not the possibility of attending the school, in order they to learn the faith, the fear of God, and the beginning off the wisdom. By all his behaviors, let the priest give good examples to the people. Let him manage well not only his own house, but also all the things related to the church. Ane let him avoid visiting the pubs, the gambling places, and the utterance of jokes, as the canons of the Holy Fathers requires us to do.

4. He also added these pieces of advice:

- Let the priests wear priestly clothing, because out of the external things one judges also the internal condition of the heart. Let them be gentle and having a clean thought, in the assemblies and in the churchly counsels, and let them not utter but beautiful and reconciling words; let them behave with the whole decency towards the "masteries and the dominions" whom they owe honor and obedience. Let them be towards the people with love, with long-patience, and with humbleness. Let them take, for religious services, only the established tax, and let them not care for ugly earning, and let them serve the poor for free, for they will receive a great reward in heavens, for this toil.

5. On the day of his ordination as Hierarch, Bishop Andrei Şaguna uttered these words:

- The most part of my life it has always been and it will always be a toil to me. But it has also been and it will be in the future, the greatest joy to me, that of defeating all impediments. I strongly believe that, being overshadowed by the mighty shield of God, I will be able to accomplish the goal of my entire life, that of waking up the Transylvanian Romanians from their deadly sleep, and willingly to draw them towards everything is true, holy, and good.

6. Bishop Andrei Şaguna proved himself to be, first of all, a true parent to the Romanians from Transylvania, a fierce defender of the rightly-worshipping Orthodoxy, but, in the same time, he was an apostle enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and who cherished above everything, the love for Christ and the national unity, and not the hatred, the enmity, of the confessional division. With his wisdom and peaceful soul, he contributed the most to the great assembly for Romanian unity from the year 1848, from the Freedom Plain.

7. Being always ready for sacrificing himself for the cause of the Church and for the cause of the union of all the Romanians from Transylvania, the Great Hierarch tarried for 7 months in Vienna, insisting on a daily basis for the national and religious independence of Transylvania Province, and he didn't come back from there until the sufferings of the oppressed people had been alleviated.

8. After the rebellion from the years 1848-1849 had come to an end, Bishop Andrei Şaguna started, with big sacrifices, the restoration, beautification, and building of tens of Orthodox Churches, in order to replace those which had been plundered and destroyed in the Transylvanian villages and cities. In a few years, all the churches form his eparchy had been renewed,

adorned, and endowed with cultic books, with icons, with vestments, and with exquisite religious services.

To all of these contributed, besides the Transylvanian believers, also those form Moldavia and from The Romanian Country. A special help was provided also bye Neamț Monastery, that sent carts loaded with cultic books and other gifts to the Orthodox Bishopric from Sibiu.

9. In order to defend the Orthodoxy and fore strengthening the spiritual and cultural life of the Romanians form Transylvania, Bishop Andrei Șaguna founded, in the year 1850, a famous eparchial printing press, at Sibiu, and that printing press was a blessing for everybody. About it, the Great Hierarch said, later on:

- This printing press, which I've been taking care of and I's been administrating it until my death, only God knows which difficulties I've been fighting in order to defend it and sustain it, against the enemies of the Church and of our Romanian nation. What could I have done in such circumstances? Could I sit at the Babylon River and cry? No! But I've been thinking at how could I spread among priesthood and among out people the systematic and steadfast knowledge about Church and about other churchly things.

10. Under the taking care of Bishop Andrei were printed, during 11 years, 35 churchly books, among which we are mentioning here:

Elements of Canonical Law (1854); *Kiriacodromion* (1855); *The History of the Eastern Universal Orthodox Church* (1860), in two volumes; *The Book of the Hours*, *The Octoechos*, *The Pentecostarion*, and *The Triodon*. Then the twelve *Manaion* (1853-1856), "after the original, proofed by His Eminence Bishop of Argeș, Kir Iosif"; *The Illustrated Bible* (1856-1858), "after the original of the 72 interprets from Alexandria", and other books.

In only a year after founding the printing press there were printed, at Sibiu, 5000 *Catechism*, 5000 *Alphabet Book*, 700 *Book of Hours*, 3000 *Biblical History*, 300 books on *The Duties of the Servants*, and 1500 *The Apostle*.

11. In the *Preface* of the *Illustrated Bible* (1858), Bishop Andrei Șaguna wrote:

- The two translations of the Bible (1648 and 1688) are the doors which the Romanian nation has been found worthy of entering through, the heavenly field of the godlike teachings, which, in the middle of the worldly storms and waves, they remain steadfast and true from century to century. Theya re the water springs springing out, for the first time, the water of the eternal life of this nation, in all the places this nation is spread to.

The waking up of the Romanian nation from the barbarism of the centuries, their making of friendship with God, they stepping towards the gentlest light of the civilization and culture, the union of our Romanian nation, for we have been sown by the hand of the Providence in so many different countries and among so many foreign nations, the remaining alive of our national language – for all these unparalleled blessings we must thank to these

old editions of the Holy Scripture, to these imperishable monuments of the morality and, above all, the our national and churchly life.

12. Then he added these words too:

- Great, truly, and deep must be our thank to the remembered great men of our people, who during such difficult times and with so humble means and powers, they have done so great things. High must have been their cogitation, deep their mind, hot their faith, true their love for God and for nation, when they bestowed to the nation such a jewelry! Healthy and uncorrupted was also their conscience they had about the need of the Romanian people for this book. That's why they also clothed the translation into the vestment of that language, in order to be understood by the Romanians from everywhere.

The language of this book wasn't invented, but it was taken out of the people's mouth. So, the translator isn't but a resound, not only of the language, but also of the feeling and, overall, of the image of the people's cogitation.

These editions can be rightly called as the first Bible – not of the Romanians from Transylvania or from The Romanian Country, or from elsewhere – but as the first Bible of the entire Romanian people, the first common voice which this people pray with to the Father from heavens. No one among the later translators can share the praise owed to these first translators who grafted, for the first time, the word of the Holy Scripture in the Romanian tree!

13. And in *The Churchly History*, volume II, pp. 122-124, he says:

- As much as the Romanian aristocracy from Transylvania had no predilection for their Church and nation, and they were driven by a vain idea, as much, let's say it, the priesthood and the Christians and in front of them the hierarchs, they showed an exemplary strength among the countless persecutions and they remained steadfast in religion and in nationality.

This soul strength was a living product of that moral conviction, that if they will renounce to one of the two, then they necessarily will be deprived of the other one as well. And because the Romanian cannot imagine his religion without his nation and nationality, in order to ensure his national existence, he remained in that religion which he has been born as Romanian, and about which he is convinced that that is the strongest shield for defending his nationality against any storms.

14. In the diocesan printing press from Sibiu, Metropolitan Andrei was printing also books for schools: spelling books, music books, arithmetic books, grammar books, history books, geography books, for the parishes' village schools, for gymnasium, and especially for the theological seminary from Sibiu. There were also printed: *The Romanian Telegraph* from 1852, *The Diocesan Calendar*, *The Annual Book of the Gymnasium from Brasov*, as also numerous brochures, churchly works, and useful to the soul works.

Thus understood the Great Hierarch to serve the Church of Christ and the people he was shepherding, by contributing, according to his power, to defending the Orthodoxy, to the enlightening, to unify, and to save his people.

15. Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna remains in the history of our nation the greatest founder of the Transylvanian school and culture.

Once the printing press had been organized, in the year 1850 he founded at Sibiu a theological and pedagogical institute, having the duration of the studies between one and three years, in order to educate good priests, enlightened and devoted to the Gospel of Christ, granting to the poor who loved studying, scholarships and free books. In order to enlighten the children from his eparchy, he founded hundreds of primary-confessional schools, in all parishes, with the teaching in Romanian. In those schools the children were studying both religious knowledge and general knowledge. Those schools were organized and founded by the Church. The parishioner priests were principals to those schools, and the chief-priests were school inspectors. The professors were paid either form the Pedagogical Institute or by the Gymnasiums from Brasov, both founded and financed by the Orthodox Bishopric from Sibiu.

In the year 1873 there were in Transylvania more than 800 primary-confessional schools, half of which had been founded by the Great Metropolitan.

16. Through these three means – churches and worthy priests, confessional schools, and books printed in Romanian – Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna strengthened, on the other side of Carpathian Mountains, the unity of the Orthodox faith, the ethnical and national unity, the thinking and action unity, against so many foreign influences.

17. This tireless hierarch and servant of the Church of Christ achieve in his eparchy also other worthy to be remembered accomplishments. He granted a big importance to the dignity and to the moral life of the priests. That's why, he was constantly advising the priests regarding the good behavior, he addressed them beautiful pastoral letters, he donated them books for religious service and material help for their churches, he undertook canonical visits, walking from village to village, and comforting and advising everybody as a father of all of them.

18. On one occasion, Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna wrote to the priest from his eparchy:

- As I feel and as I know the greatness and the difficulty of my hierarchal calling, as much I am striving to be worthy of it. But my heart aches me for only one thing, that the circumstances and my powers do not allow me to do as much as I want for our clergy and people. But I hope that my efforts, small and insignificant as the mustard seed, they will increase by the help of God if we will take care of them with a clean soul.

19. On some other occasion he said:

- If I had been born twice again, I would have been priest and servant of the Church of Christ!

20. Metropolitan Andrei "took great care for the good functioning of the village schools founded by him, and especially of the Theological Institute from Sibius, which he visited often". He lived in full harmony with the other

Christian cults from Transylvania, and he had a vast correspondence with numerous bishops, abbots, chief-priests, deputies, cultural personalities, ministers, and even with the Emperor from Vienna. This was because all of those respected him and they were conquered by his behavior and wisdom.

21. Another great achievement of Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna was the reestablishment of the old Orthodox Metropolitanate form Transylvania, that was abolished in the year 1701. On 24th of December 1864, the Bishopric of Sibiu was elevated to the rank of Metropolitanate, having autonomy, and parting with the Serbian Metropolitanate form Karlowitz.

For the good organization of the Orthodox Church form Transylvania, the Great Metropolitan issued, in the year 1868, the famous Organic Statute, based on the fool collaboration between clergy and laypeople. Thus, he proved himself to be one of the greatest churchly lawmakers.

22. So live and sacrificed himself this great hierarch of the Church of Christ. His role was rightly called as providential. And he had a devoted soul of a true shepherd, full of wisdom and courage.

On 28th of June 1873, Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna moved to the eternal life and he was buried, as a simple monk, in the yard of the church from Răşinari – Sibiu.

SCHEMAMONK GORDIE THE HERMIT
Neamţ Monastery
(† 1870)

Pious Gordie the Schemamonk was one of the great hermits of our monasteries, during the second half of the Century XIX. He originated from Northern Moldavia. Called to serve to Christ, he entered the community of the Neamţ Monastery under Abbot Dometian. There he accomplished many years in obedience, being zealous for fulfilling his monastic promises.

Abbot Neonil (1843-1853), seeing him craving for quietude, he sent him to the Icoana Veche[263] Hermitage, a few kilometers higher that the monastery. There, Schemamonk Gordie found the sweetness of the quietude and of the prayer. Then, with the blessing of his spiritual father, he withdrew himself form the hermitage in one of the surrounding forests, where he lived in ascesis, alone, for 22 years, enduring all the temptations of the wilderness: coldness, hunger, lack, illness, and the fight from the devils.

Hierarch Narcis Creţulescu († 1913) and other old men from Neamţ Monastery, they confessed that Hermit Gordie practiced an ascesis as those ascetics from yore. He was uttering, by heart, the *Book of Psalms*, and he was eating only once a day, after sunset, dry bread soaked in the water of the nearby creek, and he ate nothing else; he was sleeping a few hours at night and he had not stable dwelling place. His monastic cell was a small pit dug in

[263] Verbatim translation: The Old Icon. (E. l. t.'s n.)

the soul and covered with logs, where he dwelled especially during the winter. During the summer he was walking through the forests, barefooted, dressed with an old coat, and he was praying ceaselessly. Wherever the night caught him, there he slept for a little while, and then he woke up to prayer.

The fathers say that Hermit Gordie had been always wearing on his body an old and worn-out coat made of sackcloth. That was his only vestment, regardless it was summer of winter, day or night. Due to his harsh life, Hermit Gordie became known to everybody, for he had much power in his word and in his prayer.

And the end of his life was thus:

On one occasion, several militaries were scouting the forests, wanting to arrest a group of thieves who were hiding there. They found Gordie and thought that he knew where the thieves were hiding, but they suspected him of not wanting to give the thieves up, so they took him to Piatra Neamț City for an investigation. But there, because he was old and exhausted, he passed away peacefully, giving his soul in the hands of the Lord.

So lived and passed away Hermit Gordie, surpassing with his ascesis all the other ascetics living at that time.

HIEROSCHEMAMONK OREST BALDOVIN
The Monastic Cell of Saint Hypatius – Vatopedi – Mount Athos
(† 1878)[264]

This worthy of being remembered father, together with his brother Anastasius, they were the closest disciples of Saint Hierarch Calinic. He originated from the localities from around Bucharest City. In the year 1830 he entered the community of the Cernica Monastery, where he received the angelic countenance of the monasticism through the hands of the Great Abbot.

Being very obedient, he reached to be disciple to the monastic cell of Pious Calinic, together with brother Anastasius. And the Pious loved them so much that he often called them and fed them with advice and useful words. Sometimes he commanded them to give alms to the poor, some other times he unveiled them secret things, which were fulfilled exactly. For his humbleness and gentleness, Saint Calinic found Monk Orest worthy of the gift of the priesthood, so that Orest was serving, very zealously, in the Church of the Lord.

Wanting to withdraw himself to quietude, a little earlier than the year 1850, Hieroschemamonk Orest went to Cheia Monastery. But he hadn't found there enough peace, so that, after a few years, he went to Mount Athos, with the blessing of the Abbot, together with his disciples Hypatius and Elijah. For they liked the peace there, they bought from Vatopedi Monastery, with 700

[264] According to the Archive of the Monastic Cell of Saint Ipatius, Vatopedi, Mount Athos, and according to Archimandrite Dometius Trihenea, the superior of that monastic cell.

pieces of currency, the monastic cell having the patronage of "Saint Hierarch and Martyr Hypatius", which is situated two kilometers higher up on the mountain from the monastery.

There, the good ascetic renewed the monastic cell of Saint Hypatius entirely, he planted olive trees and vine, and he welcomed numerous disciples form the country. The Romanian fathers form Mount Athos, who knew Hieromonk Orest Baldovin, they say that he was famous on the whole mountain for the holiness of his life, for his gentleness, and for his love for foreigners. And that he was sweet and wise at word, and that he served the holy services with a great awe; he had the gift of the prayer and he was resting everybody as another Abraham. Among the 700 Romanian monks who lived at that time in ascesis on Mount Athos, many visited the monastic cell of Father Orest, for confession and for useful word. He was visited by numerous pilgrims form the country, by hermits and ascetics of Greek, Russian, Bulgarian, and Serbian nationality. This was because Hieroschemamonk Orest reached to be a skilled confessor of Mount Athos.

For more quietude, Father Orest made for himself two huts in the forest, where he was living in ascesis alone, especially during the fasting time. Once he told to his disciples:

- Bless me, fathers, so that I'll go to the hut. Reaching close to his hut, a viper suddenly rushed towards him to kill him. But he placed his rosary in front of the snake and told to it:

- I won't do any harm to you, neither you will do to me!

Then, after he asked Saint Hypatius for help, the snake got tamed and ashamed and it withdrew itself into the forest.

Pious Orest, seeing the old church of Saint Hypatius partially ruined, he renewed it with great efforts, in the year 1873, receiving much help form the country. Thus, Father Orest Baldovin led that "monastic cell" for many years, as a lit torch placed in a candlestick, with parental love, with fasting, with prayer, and with deep humbleness, being himself a role-model in everything, to his disciples. Then he reached an old age, and he called his disciples to himself and told them:

- My sons, I'm starting to go now on the path that God called me on. He Who said "You are dust and you will turn into dust" (Gen. 3: 19).

And his disciples got sad and asked him:

- All-Pious Father, what will we do after your passing away?

Encouraging them, the old man answered them:

- My all-beloved sons, have hope in God, ask for the help of the Mother of the lord and of Saint Hypatius, and guard with holiness the rule of the prayer and of the monastic canon. If you live so, you will live in peace, as we would have been together, and God will guar this dwelling place and you against any harm. Fulfill these and you will be saved.

After he had said these, he withdrew in his monastic cell and there he prayer alone, with fasting and with tears, for three days. And on the feast day

of the Raising of the Holy Cross, on 14th of September 1878, he served the Holy Liturgy, and then he told to his disciples:

- Forgive me, brothers, and may God forgive you! and he immediately yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord.

SAINT ANTIPAS FROM ATHOS
Valaam Monastery
(1786-1882)[265]

Pious Antipas was a great spiritual ascetic and a holy monk sprouted out by the Moldavia's land during the XIX Century. This soldier of Christ - his baptism name being Alexander Luchian – was born in the year 1816, to a family of believer peasants, from Calapodeşti Village – Bacău. At the age of 20 he was guided by the Holy Ghost to enter the monastic ascesis.

He firstly lived in ascesis for two years (1836-1837), in the community of Căldăruşani Monastery. Then he went to Mount Athos and settled himself down at the Romanian Lacu Hermitage, where 80 Romanian hermits were living in ascesis. There he learnt the craftsmanship of the spiritual ascesis from the most renowned Athonite monks, and he reached famous in his hermitage for his fasting and toils. There too he was tonsured in monasticism and he was found worthy by God of the gift of the tears and of the ceaseless prayer.

After almost fifteen years of living ad a hermit in the Lacu Hermitage, the good ascetic lived for four more years in Esphigmenou Monastery. There he received the great and angelic countenance of the schemamonk, under the name Antipas, and he was ordained deacon. Thus, by multiplying the monastic toils and the vigils of all-night, Pious Antipas was honored by all monks from Mount Athos as a great hermit and worker of *The Prayer to Jesus*. He was also found worthy of the gift of healing the illnesses and of the fore-knowing.

Loving more the loneliness and the humbleness than the honor and the praise, in the year 1860 Pious Antipas left Mount Athos and turned back to Moldavia, to the monasteries from around Iaşi City. But there he saw himself surrounded by many believers, for his name became famous all over the country, so that after three years he left and went to bow down before the holy relics of the Pious Fathers form Pecerska Monastery. Then he reached at the monasteries from North, where he bewildered all the fathers form there with the holiness of his life. From there, after he heard about the Famous Orthodox Monastery Valaam, situated on an island from Lake Lagoda, near to the Karelia's border (Finland), Pious Antipas, for he loved the blessed quietude and the estrangement, in the year 1865, he settled himself down in that monastery. There lived very advanced monks, ceaseless workers, and skilled teacher of *The Prayer to Jesus*.

[265] Archimandrite Ieronim Motoc, "Pious Hieroschemamonk Antipas from Athos", in *Romanian Saints*…, p. 543.

In Valaam Monastery, Pious Antipas lived in ascesis for other 17 years, being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood and "showing wonderful deeds of spiritual living, in fasting, in prayer, and in consummate poverty". His deepest ascesis was the fiery prayer of the heart, which he ceaselessly extolled God through, he was banishing away the unclean thoughts, and he was tasing the untold joys of the Holy Ghost. To that he added the prolonged fasting, vigil during the whole night, tears, prostrations, and other unknown spiritual efforts. He also often officiated the Godlike Liturgy and he was praying much for the world and fore the country where he was born.

For such an ascesis, Pious Hieroschemamonk Antipas Luchian received from God the gift of working miracles and of fore-knowing. He knew the hidden thoughts of the people and he advised many on the path to salvation. He was also a great spiritual father and a skilled teacher of *The Prayer of the Heart*. That's why his name reached to be famous both in Karelia and in Northern Russia, and many monks and loving-of God believers searched for him and followed his teaching. He had also in Valaam Monastery a few chosen disciples, among whom the most advanced was Hieromonk Poemen, a pious and very taught man.

After a blessed ascesis like that, Pious Antipas from Athos yielded his soul, peacefully, in the arms of Savior Christ, on 10th of January 1882, and he was buried in the cemetery of Valaam Monastery. He is the only Romanian monk who has ever lived in ascesis in that famous hesychastic monastery from Northern Europe.

In the year 1883, the father from Valaam Monastery saw that Hieroschemamonk Antipas Luchian was venerated by disciples and by believers as a saint, they organized the summarized writing of his life, towards the praise of God and towards souly benefit. Thus, Hieromonk Poemen, his disciple from his monastic cell, he wrote in the same year the ascesis of his spiritual father, a work entitled "The Worthy of Being Remembered Life of Hieroschemamonk Antipas".

The Life of Pious Antipas was printed in Petersburg, in two editions, in the years 1883 and 1893, being spread all over Russia and Finland, and also at Mount Athos. And his canonization and his enlisting among the saints was done at Mount Athos, in the year 1906, 24 years after his passing away. In the *Menaion* on January, on the 10th day, printed in Russian at Pantelimon Monastery from Athos, at the page no. 46, it is mentioned also *Pious Hieroschemamonk Antipas from Athos*, and his life in brief. His name is honored especially in the monasteries form the Holy Mountain, he being the only Romanian monk from Athos enlisted among the saints and counted among the las pious fathers from Athos[266].

So lived in ascesis and passed away pleasant to God, far from his country, a great Romanian Pious, a teacher of the quietude and of the ceaseless prayer!

[266] Fr. Prof. Liviu Stan, *quoted work*, pp. 73-75.

All-Pious Antipas, pray to God for us!

CONFESSOR JOSAPHAT APOSTOLIU
Neamț Monastery
(1764-1883)[267]

This Pious Father was one of the most famous confessors of Neamț Monastery during the Century XIX.

Born in Călineşti-Botoşani Commune to very-loving-of Christ parents, he entered the monastic ascesis in the year 1785. At that time, the spiritual life at Neamț Monastery, under the leadership of Great Abbot Paisius, it reached its peak of flourishment. Being entrusted to some advanced fathers, the young John was educated, he learnt the rules of the church, and he tasted the sweetness of the prayer and of the spiritual ascesis.

After he had become a monk, the Great Abbot Paisius passed away (1794), so that the young monk was crossing through all the monastic tasks, until the beginning of the Century XIX: Then, after the fathers had seen his thoughtfulness and wisdom, they ordained him priest and made him confessor. And Hieroschemamonk Iosaphat was counted among the group of the 24 confessors appointed to receiving the confession of sins, of the community, and to educating new beginners. Later on, After the old confessors had passed away, Pious Iosaphat became the chief-confessor of Neamț Monastery.

About this worthy-of-being-praised father, the monastery's tradition tells us that he was balanced in everything, and he had the right-reckoning. He was neither harsh nor forgiving everything; he neither kept himself upset with somebody, nor was him too gentle on everybody; neither was him speaking much, nor he was speaking vainly. But he was speaking a little, in understandable words, and according to the wound of each one. And his parental words, as some spiritual arrows, they were alleviating the pain, they were appeasing the temptation, the were banishing away the passions, and they were wounding the heart with the love of Christ, for he was strengthened by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Confessor Iosaphat lived himself an ascetic life of a great hermit and of one who was praying for the people. He ate once a day, after sunset. His monastic cell was a secret church. There he was praying with unknown tears and he was doing many prostrations each night. He never missed from the church, and after the religious service he was visiting the ill fathers form the infirmary and from their monastic cells, and he was advising the brothers and he was comforting, with a great love, the believers. He was receiving the confession of everybody, he was listening to them, he was blessing them, and he was understanding, by the gift of God, the condition of each one.

[267] States Archives – Neamț Branch, Neamț Monastery Fund, on the years 1800-1883.

For 70 years Pious Iosaphat was the chief-confessor of the great monastery. To him were coming the abbots, the bishops, the schemamonks, the monks, the laypeople, and all the hermits from Neamţ forests. He had raised and tonsured in monasticism more than 500 spiritual sons, among which some of them reached to be hermits, abbots, and chosen hierarchs.

After such an ascesis, Pious Iosaphat the Confessor yielded his soul in the hand of Christ, on 4th of May 1883, and he was mourned by the entire community of the monastery.

About him, one of his disciples wrote in the *Register of the Buried* of the cemetery of Neamţ Monastery: "Iosaphat Apostoliu the Confessor, Hieroschemamonk, born in Călimăneşti Commune, in the year 1764, on 1st of January, and dead in the year 1883, on 4th of May, a holy man, founder, who lived 119 years. He was grandfather to Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu from Neamţ Monastery"[268].

ARCHIMANDRITE THEOPHANOUS CRISTEA
The New Neamţ Monastery
(1810-1883)[269]

He originated from Transylvania, namely from Harghita County, and he was an uncle to Miron Christea, who was the first Patriarch of Romania. Taking upon himself, from his youth, the yoke of Christ, he became a monk at Neamţ Monastery, under the great Abbot Neonil. Then, by learning from chosen confessors the ascesis of the monastic life, and by learning very well the obedience and the entire wisdom, he was found worthy of the godlike priesthood.

Hieromonk Theophanus was a skilled, steadfast, assertive, and very taught monk. He knew four foreign languages, he was reading on a daily basis the writings of the Holy Fathers, and he was comforting everybody with chosen words from the Holy Gospel. In the monastery he had good disciples and many people were searching for him for useful word.

His most important task was that of supervising the units subordinated to Neamţ Monastery, as also the benefaction works done by the monastery. Hieromonk Theophanous led the works for building the hospital, the infirmary, the schools, and the pharmacy from the monastery and from Tg. Neamţ. He took care of ill people, of doctors, of medicines, of buildings' maintenance, he took care of people, all of them being paid by the monastery's finances. And he was just and merciful on each person. No one was sent back by him without being firstly listened to, or without being helped, or without hearing a

[268] Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu, *The Library of Neamț Monastery*, manuscript no. 139, 1901, p. 37.

[269] C. Tomescu, *Short Historical Story about the Holy Neamț Monastery*, p. 60; *The History of the New Neamț Monastery*, by Confessor Andronic, manuscript no. 185, The Library of Neamț Monastery; Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu, *The History of New Neamț Monastery*, manuscript no. 64, The Library of Neamț Monastery.

comforting word. That's why all the patients loved him and honored him as a spiritual father for the children and for the inhabitants of Tg. Neamţ and from the villages, for he was kind and fearing God in everything.

Another good deed of Hieromonk Theophanous was his tight spiritual connection he maintained between Neamţ Monastery and the churches from Transylvania. Each year he organized small pilgrimages of Transylvanian believers, especially on patrons' day and on big feast days, and he accommodated and comforted those pilgrims in the monastery, and he sent them back comforted and strengthened into the right-faith. Other monks from Neamţ Monastery, loving of Christ and of nation, they were doing the same thing. Hieromonk Theophanous Cristea was ending, annually, missionaries from Neamţ Monastery, carrying churchly books and sharing those books, for free, to the priests and to the Orthodox churches from the other side of the Carpathian Mountains. Immediately as a new book came out from under the printing press, the monks fille dup their backpacks, or even the carts, and they left for Transylvania.

In the year 1863, Hieromonk Theophanous, together with Confessor Andronic and with several of their disciples, they settled themselves down, definitively, at the subordinated unit of the Neamţ Monastery, called Chiţcani, from Tighina County. And in the year 1864, with the help of the Neamţ Monastery and of the believers, they founded a famous monastery called "The New Neamţ", and they gathered around themselves up to a hundred monks. The first Abbot was himself Hieromonk Theophanous, who later one became archimandrite. And this Pious had organized that monastery so well, that in a short time it became one of the biggest coenobitic communities, with communal life, from Moldavia.

So lived in ascesis Archimandrite Theophanous, the founder of the New Neamţ Monastery. Then, feeling himself called by Christ to the resting from above, he kissed goodbye his disciples, and he passed away, peacefully, in the year 1883.

SCHEMA-NUN TAVEFTA URSACHE
Agapia Monastery
(† 1883)

This Schema-worthy of being remembered Nun, was the most chosen abbot of Agapia Monastery form the XIX Century.

Born in Vaslui City to believer parents, she was brought to monastery at a young age, and raised with care, in the fear of God. Then, after learning the humbleness and the obedience form her spiritual mothers, she was tonsured in monasticism and she became a bride of Christ.

On 20th of January 1858, Mother Tavefta Ursache was elected Abbot by the entire community of Agapia Monastery, which she led it with

thoughtfulness and with skillfulness for 26 years, as a true spiritual mother. He took a special care of fulfilling the monastic duties and for adorning the churchly religious services, for maintaining the moral live within monastery, by often confession of sins and impartation, by obedience without protesting, and by regularly attending the holy religious service by the entire community. All of these increased the number of the servants of Christ, from Agapia Monastery, up to 500 souls.

The same special care Schema-Nun Tavefta took also for renewing the Agapia Monastery. Between the years 1858-1862, she entirely restored the big church and she brought the best Romanian painter of that time, Nicolae Grigorescu, who beautifully adorned the church with painting, as one can see even today. She also restored the monastic cells from inside the enclosure, and the church of Old Agapia Monastery. She organized workshops for tapestry and embroidery, and fore the young sisters she opened a four grades school, where they taught reading, writing, religion, history, typicon, and churchly music.

In the year 1873, Abbot Tavefta framed in silver the icons form the iconostasis, as also the miracle-working icon of the Mother of the Lord. And from the wealth she inherited from her parents, she donated several precious cultic objects to the church, as also crosses, icons, and vestments. For her gentleness and wisdom, the Moldavia's Metropolitan made her stavrophore and archimandrite.

This was the full-of-self-bestowing and full-of-spiritual fruits life of Abbot Tavefta Ursache. At the age prophesized by Psalmist David, Schema-Nun Tavefta moved to the eternal dwelling places, on 26th of January 1883, mourned and missed by the community of the two Agapia Monasteries.

ARCHIMANDRITE GHERMAN IONESCU
Tazlău Monastery – Neamţ
(† 1885)

Archimandrite Gherman became monk at Neamţ Monastery. A zealous monk, a skilled scholar, and a servant devoted to the Church of Christ. He knew Slavonic, and partially Greek. In the year 1857 he wrote a brief history of Agapia Monastery, and other spiritual notes which have been lost.

In the year 1867 Archimandrite Gherman Ionescu was appointed abbot to Tazlău Monastery – Neamţ, which he found it in a state of dereliction. It was immediately after secularization. Remembering the fame from yore of this monastery, remembering Pious Chiriac and Onuphrius, and so many others who lived there in ascesis during Century XVII, Abbot Gherman tried, according to his power, to revive the spiritual life from that famous monastic hearth of Moldavia.

Firstly, he gathered around him a few monks, for he had nobody whom to officiate the religious services together with. Then he personally copied the

founders' remembrance list, as one can see it even today, and he reinstated the typicon of the religious services in the Romanian language. Also, he casted a new big bell and he adorned the church with books, vestments, candlesticks, and with other necessary objects, so that in the year 1867 Tazlău Monastery had 10 monks who were maintaining the chain of the daily religious services: the Vespers, the Matins, the Holy Liturgy, and the Requiem for the founders.

In the year 1881, Archimandrite Gherman went to be confessor to Agapia Monastery. In his testament, among other things, he gave to his disciples these beautiful teaching words:

"We, brothers, as one who willingly have committed themselves to pray for the people towards God, we must not get ourselves discouraged while fulfilling with holiness our monastic duty, but we must, with constant firmness, to fix the sight of our spirit into God, the unique Center of the stability and of the truth, Whom we have made ourselves close servants to. May protect us against laziness and against inattention, the fearsome words of the godlike John Chrysostom, as he tells to the priests: "It seem to me that among the ordained ones only a few will be saved". Also, the dreadful menaces of the Holy Ghost, uttered through the prophet: "Curse is everyone who does inattentively the thing of the Lord!" (Jer. 40: 10).

Under this curse can fall more easily the priests, who because of their inattentiveness or because of their pride, thinking about themselves as being wise, they dare to make reforms in the settlement of the godlike religious services. Or even to leave something out, especially the remembrance of the deceased ones, which are canonized and prescribed by the Church's typicon.

Regarding the remembrance of the deceased ones – the Abbot added – I am a strong hope into the conscience of your holiness, that if you do not do those better, at least you won't diminish them, knowing that God too is brought, on this purpose, as daily sacrifice. Concluding therefore, with themselves the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "As you want the people to do to you, you do the same to them" (Mt. 7: 12), I am recommending myself as brother of your love into Christ. Gherman Ionescu – Archimandrite"[270].

At Agapia Monastery Archimandrite Gherman printed in the year 1880 a "rulebook" of the monasteries from Neamț County, as also other useful-to-the-soul words. And in the year 1885 he withdrew himself to the monastery where he firstly became a monk, and there he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hands of the Lord.

[270] The Archive of Tazlău Monastery, Neamț County.

HIEROSCHEMAMONK NEOPHYTE ELIADE
Neamţ Monastery
(† 1886)

Pious Schemamonk Neophyte was a father with a highly spiritual life in the community of Neamţ Monastery, as there were few others at his measure, around the half of the Century XIX.

Son of free peasants from Vrancea Country, the young Nicholas was sent to school from a young age. Then, for he loved Christ more than the things form the world, he entered the community of Neamţ Monastery. There he consummately learnt the Greek language, he studied the writings of the Holy Fathers and the Holy scripture, from skilled teachers, reaching in a short time to surpass everybody with his zeal, with his ascesis, and with his wisdom.

Abbot Neonil, seeing Neophyte's zeal, he made him monk immediately, and he sent him to Pocrov Hermitage. There, the good soldier of Christ received the angelic countenance of the schemamonk and he became a hermit and a famous ascetic. This was because there was a custom at Neamţ Monastery that the most zealous monks to withdraw themselves to Pocrov, where yore lived a few hermits with a holy life. There the Pious was living in ascesis by fasting, by uttering *The Prayer to Jesus*, by taking vigils, and by reading the Holy Scripture. He ate once a day, in the evening, and he slept a few hours at night.

Being called back to Neamţ Monastery, he was ordained priest and appointed confessor and teacher of Greek to the monastic school from the monastery, organized at his advice, where there were studying almost one hundred brothers. This all-pious father was a great Hellenist and a teacher of *The Prayer to Jesus*. For almost three decades he raised many disciples and he brought a current of spiritual renewal in Neamţ and Secu Monasteries, including their hermitages.

Also, at the advice of Neophyte Eliade, the Neamţ Monastery built in Tg. Neamţ, between the years 1850-1856, a big hospital, a pharmacy, and a school for public benefit. There were also made, at his advice, a school in Vînători Village, a pharmacy and a hospital for mentally ill patients in the monastery, and "many other good things".

Between the years 1870-1877, Pious Neophyte was abbot of Secu Monastery, and he made many donations and he renewed the community's spiritual life. He conquered everybody with his gentle and wise word, especially for he was spiritually educating them with the example of his life, for there was no other at his measure, in that area.

For a chosen life like that one, the monks of Neamţ Monastery prayed him to be their abbot and spiritual father. But he rejected such an honor, because of reckoning himself unworthy of it. Also, the Moldavian's ruler and the other hierarchs proposed him to be Metropolitan and Father of Moldavia, in the year 1860, for he became know everywhere. But he ran into the wilderness, for he loved the quietude and the prayer more than the world's disturbance. He

neither translated books from Greek, except for one, *Singing of Zionist Praise*, printed in the year 1871. And that was because he reckoned more useful to educate the people with the deed than with the word.

In the year 1877 he renounced to the abbotship of Secu Monastery, and he withdrew himself to the monastery which he firstly became monk. Then, after living for a short while and being pleasant to God, he passed away, peacefully, in the year 1886, being added to the group of the pious fathers from Neamț Monastery.

Lo how Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu, who was one of his disciples, describes him: "Neophyte Eliade, an erudite man, Hellenist, great Hieroschemamonk, hermit, great ascetic at Pocrov Hermitage, former Abbot of Secu Monastery between the years 1870-1886(?). He was a capable man, he advised to be built the hospital, the school, the pharmacy in Tg. Neamț, and the infirmaries from the Monastery, and he did other great jobs. In our century Romanian doesn't have such a man; he rejected the abbotship and the Metropolitanate of Moldavia. He who hasn't seen this Father Neophyte in his prayers, he hasn't' sin the embodied holiness. He died on 3rd of February 1886 in Neamț Monastery, where he withdrew himself from the abbotship of Secu Monastery". And in the *Register with the Ones Buried in the Cemetery of Neamț Monastery*, the same disciple wrote about his teacher: "Hieroschemamonk Neophyte Eliade is the greatest ascetic man of our days, a profound Hellenist, a great founder..., a rare old age..."[271].

ARCHIMANDRITE TIMOTHY IONESCU
Abbot of Neamț Monastery
(1806-1887)[272]

Archimandrite Timothy Ionescu was the most venerable abbot of Neamț Monastery from the second half of the Century XIX (1860-1887). He was born in Bolbocii-Soroca Village, in the year 1806. His father, being priest, gave him a chosen education since his childhood.

In the year 1833 he left his parental house and went to Neamț Monastery. There, after a few years of apprenticeship next to the most chosen confessors, he was tonsured in the monastic scheme by Abbot Neonil. Then, for 25 years, he was appointed to all the monastic tasks and jobs, from the lowest ones up to that of servant to the holy altar. But due to his gentleness and humbleness, he was fulfilling all his tasks with joy and he was loved by the entire community.

[271] Hierarch Narcis Creulescu, *Notes and Inscriptions from Neamț Monastery*, 1905, manuscript no. 171 from the Library of Neamț Monastery, p. 142; manuscript no. 139 from the year 1901, The Library of Neamț Monastery, pages 52 and 52 v.
[272] According to the Old Archive of Neamț Monastery.

In the year 1860, Abbot Gherasim withdrew himself from the leadership of the monastery, and nobody wanted to accept being nominated to that difficult task. Then, one of the confessors told to the other ones:

- I hope Father Timothy from the sheep won't be our abbot! When the fathers from the council heard his name, they shouted out, urged by the Holy Ghost:

- Let Father Timothy from sheep to be our abbot!

Since that day Monk Timothy Ionescu was called back from the sheepfold, he was ordained priest and archimandrite, and then appointed Abbot of Neamţ Monastery and of all its subordinated units.

At that time Neamţ Monastery crossed through an epoque of hard trials in its history: the secularization of the churchly wealth, the closing of the printing press, the lack of the necessary means for the infirmary and for the hospital for mentally ill patients, which sheltered up to 100 patients. Then, the lack of food and of other means necessary to the Monastic Seminary and for the entire community that counted almost 500 monks: above all of these, there was a weakening of the spiritual life within monastery.

All of those were waiting for a savior renewal from the new Abbot. The fire from 25th of November 1862, which destroyed almost the entire enclosure, the churches, the bells, and the library, it brought the Neamţ Monastery's community into an even more difficult situation.

Facing those hard trials, Abbot Timothy didn't get discouraged, neither he doubted about the mercy of God. But by being strengthened by the gift of Christ, and after taking blessing from the miracle-working-icon of the Mother of the lord, he started gathering material help from the Church and form the state, from monks, and from believers, in order to rebuilt the enclosure that was destroyed by fire. Firstly, he renewed the roof of the big church, a church consecrated to the Ascent of the Lord, and he paved it with marble. Then he restored the church consecrated to Saint George, the belfry, the chapels, and he built a two-stories block of monastic cells around the enclosure. He recast the big bell that was melted din the fire, he moved the hospital for mentally ill patient out of the enclosure, he renewed the chapel for holy water, and he repaired the water pipes.

Archimandrite Timothy took a special care for restoring the monastic life within the monastery. He firstly reorganized the printing press and set it in working. For two decades (1863-1883) in Neamţ Monastery had been printed numerous religious and cultic books, in tens of thousands of copies, which then were distributed to churches and monasteries.

Abbot Timothy restored, also, the library, gathering from everywhere valuable books, manuscripts or printed, counting up to 20.000, in order to replace those consumed by fire. In the same time, he strived to take care of the patients from the hospital and for the infirmary from the monastery, as also of those from Tg. Neamţ that was administrated by the monastery, where the patients were treated for free. Abbot Timothy took the same care for

encouraging the education, by maintaining the Seminary from the monastery and by providing subventions from the monastery's incomes also to the public schools from Tg. Neamţ and from Vânători Village.

The Great Abbot made special efforts also for renewing the spiritual life from the monastery and from its subordinated hermitages. And he started that by imposing the regular presence of the community to the churchly religious services, which the abbot never missed from. Then he appointed good confessors for the monks and for the laypeople, and he forced the community to confess their sins and to be imparted more often. He introduces order and discipline while in the church, at the refectory, at fulfilling the tasks, at the monastic cells, and by and large everywhere. Ge proceeded exactly in the same manner at Secu Monastery too, as also at the hermitages, and so he strengthened the love bond among everyone.

In the year 1873, Abbot Timothy had in Neamţ Monastery a community of 360 monks, composed of 6 archimandrites, 30 confessors and hieromonks, 18 deacons, and 306 monks. In Secu Monastery he had 89 monks, in Vovidenia Hermitage he had 50 monks, in Pocrov Hermitage he had 16 monks, in Hihăstria Hermitage he had 11 monks, and in Sihla Hermitage he had 9 monks. Among those monks, there were living in ascesis, together with the Moldavians, 28 Transylvanian monks, 25 Bessarabian monks, 7 monks from Oltenia, and a few others originated from other countries. All of them lived in special harmony with one another and they obeyed in every aspect the teachings of the gentle abbot. If somebody had committed some grave offense in the community, the Abbot send him, as penance, to one of the hermitages subordinated to the monastery. After fulfilling the penance, the monk could turn back to the community where he became monk in the first place.

During the Independence War from the year 1877, Abbot Timothy proved to be a good patriot and he showed a great mercy on the wounded, and he gathered monetary funds for the country, and he sent monks to the ambulances from the front line.

Thus, the Great Abbot, guided by the gift of the Holy Ghost, he was present everywhere: at the church, at the infirmary, at the guest house, at the library, at the printing press, at welcoming the strangers, and at the confession chair. He was leading all the things wisely, he was embracing everybody with love, and he had for each monk or layman a spiritual word for comforting and for encouraging.

After 27 years of humble monastic ascesis, and after 27 more years of fruitful spiritual guidance of the Neamţ Monastery, Pious Archimandrite Timothy Ionescu yielded his souls in the hands of Christ, on 10th of June 1887, being led to his tomb by a procession of 500 monks, while the bells of the 10 monasteries and subordinated hermitages were weeping.

At the cemetery, his disciple read Abbot Timothy's will, namely these useful to the soul words:

"I pray you, my beloved ones, do not forger my advice, of the humble Timothy. Do not forget the promises you have made at the mystery of the monasticism. Do not forget the name you wear, neither the name of the monastery which you live in. Strive yourselves to honour it by your deeds. Make yourselves worthy of it.

Love the Lord's law, guard the Church and its holy monastic settlements. Keep the good customs which you have learnt from your forerunner fathers. Follow on the holy path and to not allow yourselves to fall into the traps of the worldly lures. Remember your fathers form yore and, by following their faith, you will find help on the path of your salvation.

Strive yourselves with the whole your power to ennoble your soul and for perfect your thoughts by reading the godlike Holy Scriptures, by always guarding the Lord's commandments and the teachings of the Church's teachers. Love on one another and help on one another, with holy love into the Lord, for, by saving yourselves, you to save others too. Do not cry for me, by cry for yourselves, so that you will resurrect to the Lord!

I, Timothy, dead, I am going with hope to my fathers and I am leaving to you this will as a dowry, in order each of you to wear with holiness the monasticism until the end of your life!"[273].

NUN EUPHROSYNE LAZU
Văratec Monastery
(1797-1888)

This loving-of Christ nun was the daughter of the Voivode's adviser Constantin Lazu, from Drăgăneşti Commune – Suceava Country. Renouncing to the wealth of her parents, she embraced form a young age the humble monastic life in Văratec Monastery. In the year 1814 she received the monastic countenance and she was for many years under the obedience to Abbot Olimpiada and to the Great Confessor Iosif the Hermit. From them she learnt how to adorn her soul with all the good deeds and especially with the spiritual wisdom.

After the death of Abbot Olimpiada, in the year 1844, the community of the monastery elected her as their spiritual mother. And she advised that community with much skilfulness and self-giving for 44 years. Gathering around herself over 500 mothers and sisters, Abbot Euphrosyne Lazu took care of their souly needs, as well as she took care of their earthly needs.

Thus, she built the Saint John the Baptist Church and the Transfiguration Church, and she appointed the most enlightened nuns as

[273] Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu, *Improvised Word at the Burial of Abbot Timothy Ionescu from Neamț Monastery*, Neamț Monastery, 1887.

teachers. She also made some renewals inside the enclosure and she organized workshops for crafting carpets, inside the monastery.

In the year 1888 Monk Euphrosyne Lazu moved to the eternal resting, ages 91, leaving behind a well-shaped monastic community and strengthened on the foundation of the love.

PIOUS SCHEMAMONK AXENTIE THE HERMIT
Great Ascetic at Mount Athos
(† 1980)

Pious Monk Axentie was a great Romanian hermit from Mount Athos. He originated form Moldavia. Around the year 1850 he went to Mount Athos where he was tonsured in monasticism, at one of the monastic cells form around Athos Mountain.

Then, for he was very zealous for the hermit-like life, and for he was burning with the love for Christ, he withdrew himself in one of the uninhabited caves from under the peak of Mount Athos. He lived there alone, in deep ascesis, in fasting, in prayer, and in tears, so that he reached a great spiritual measure. This was because he consummately received from God the gift of the tears, of the fore-knowing, and of *The Prayer of the Heart*.

This Pious Romanian Hermit reached with his ascesis the measure of the fathers from yore, and he lived in ascesis, for the whole his life, alone, in vigils for the whole night, in hunger and in thirst, in cold and in awful temptations from the devils. But the hand of the Lord was protecting him, and the gift of the Holy Ghost was resting within his soul. He descended to Prodromul Hermitage only once in a while, he confessed his sins, he received the All-Clean Mysteries, and after that he went again into wilderness.

So lived Pious Axentie the Hermit, as an unquenched candle, under the peak of Mount Athos, for 40 years, ceaselessly extolling God and praying day and night to the world and for his country. The local monks were honouring Father Axentie as a true saint. But his life was hidden into Christ.

Once, two monks from Lavra Monastery went to visit the hermits' caves form under the peak of Mount Athos. They found Pious Axentie passed away, still on his knees and with his hands raised to prayer. They immediately took him to the Lavra and buried him in the monastery's cemetery.

Lord, rest our Pious Father Axentie with Your saints!

ARCHIMANDRITE ANDRONIC POPOVICI
New Neamţ Monastery
(1820-1893)

He was the son of Priest Ioan Popovici from Lungani Comune – Iaşi. Being called by Christ, he entered the community of Neamţ Monastery, as himself confessed, at the age of only 11 years (1831). For 5 years, the young Andrew was schooled in monastery, learning well the typicon, the churchly music, and the book binding, and crossing through all the monastic tasks.

In the year 1836 he was tonsured on monasticism. After 15 years of living in obedience, he was ordained priest and he was appointed ecclesiarch of the church and confessor of the community. This was for Hieromonk Andronic was very gentle, silence, and zealous at church, obedient in all aspects, and very loving of ascesis. For that he was honoured by the community as a very humble, pious monk and as a skilled confessor[274].

In the archive of the monastery on the year 1885 are written, about this confessor, the following things:

"Andronic, confessor, 36 years old; 25 years in the Monastery, for 17 years monk at Neamţ Monastery, ecclesiarch of the monastery and he was also at the guest house manager, for the mothers (the women visiting the monastery), at Ocea subordinated unit for 10 years, at the cattle, at the shoe workshop, at the bakery, at the book binding workshop, at the wine cellar, cook, disciple to the old men Seraphim, Nicephorus, and Narcis, at Secu for 13 years and six months, singer, ecclesiarch, and typicon follower".

This great confessor had the school of the obedience and of the humbleness, which constitute the basis of the spiritual life. He fulfilled any order he received, he never protested, but he joyfully was cutting off his will. He was sent for several times, together with his uncle, Monk Laurentius, to transport books printed in the monastery, over the mountains to the Transylvania Romanians, as also in Moldavia to churches and to hermitages.

In the year 1861 he was appointed Abbot of Sihăstria Hermitage, and then to Secu Monastery. There he made some renewals and he educated several disciples. He also wrote *The History of the Neamţ and Secu Monasteries*, in two tomes, at the end of which he placed the following note: "Holy fathers, and brothers, with humble prostration... I am praying your love, receive also this small gathering of flowers, as fruit of my mind and of my heart... The most unworthy and the most sinner, Andronic, Hieromonk and Confessor from the holy monasteries Neamţ and Secu..."[275].

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[274] Archimandrite Andronic Popovici had at Neamţ Monastery also a brother of his father, Monk Laurentius, a famous book binder. That one was also transporting book from the monastery's printing press to the believers from Transylvania.

[275] Manuscript, form the year 1862, BAR, quote no. 1269. To be seen also at Vicar Bishop Nestor Severineanul, "An Unknown Manuscript of Confessor Andronic. History of the Secu Monastery", in *M. M.*, no. 3-4 / 1974, pp. 180-196.

Two years later (1863), Hieroschemamonk Andronic, together with the Hieromonk Theophanous Cristea, they went to the monastery's subordinated unit from Tighina, called Chiţcani, where they founded a monastery called by them "The New Neamţ". That daughter of the Neamţ Monastery became, in a short time, so big and so well organized, that it was catching up with its mother. In that monastery Archimandrite Andronic, its founder, was also abbot for a few years, being him very loved and searched for by monks and by believer laymen.

After 62 years of serving the Church of Christ up to own sacrifice, leaving behind hundreds of spiritual sons and a few renewed, by him, monasteries and hermitages, the great Confessor and Archimandrite Andronic Popovici passed away, peacefully, in the year 1893, and he was buried at New Neamţ Monastery, founded by him.

ARCHIMANDRITE NECTARIUS BANUL
Mount Tabor
(1818-ca.1900)[276]

This Pious Father was the closest disciple and the biographer of Irinarh Rosetti. He was the son of priest Alexandru Banul from Călineşti Village – Roman County, and he was born in the year 1818. Form a young age, he remained orphan of both his parents. In the year 1834, when he was 15, he heard about the Great Abbot Irinarh Rosetti from Horaiţa Monastery, and he entered that abbot's hermitage. Later on, the Abbot made him monk and deacon, giving him the name Nectareous. At the same time his sister, Mersonia, became a nun at Giurgeni Monastery – Roman, which was a nun monastery.

In the year 1843, when Archimandrite Irinarh had left for Jerusalem, he took as his disciple also Hierodeacon Nectareous, due to his obedience and gentleness. There they lived together in ascesis, for almost 20 years, sharing with one another all the temptations, the troubles, and the joys of the hermit-like life.

They had lived in ascesis, in the first place, at Nazareth. Then they had climbed Mount Tabor and there they became hermits famous in all Galilee, for their chosen life, for their patience and humbleness. During the whole his life Pious Nectareous served his spiritual father with faithfulness and with love, never disobeying his word. In the year 1859, Archimandrite Irinarh moved from this life, after he firstly foretold to his disciple that the disciple will remain Abbot on Tabor and that the disciple will be the one finishing the church which Irinarh started building.

After the dead of his abbot, Pious Nectareous was ordained priest and archimandrite, in the year 1862, by Cyril, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Then,

[276] Irinarh Rosetti, "The Life of an Improved Romanian Monk", in *B.O.R.*, 1989, pp. 603-632.

Nectareous lived in ascesis, by himself, on Tabor, "for 20 more years, for the lord and for the pleasing of the patriarch, serving not only the Holy Liturgy, but also providing all the means necessary to the monastery". He finished building the church in the year 1862 and he consecrated it in the same year, on the Feast of the Lord's Transfiguration. He later on built some monastic cells and the surrounding wall. And in the year 1892, feeling himself old and ill, he withdrew himself to Saint Sava Monastery, near to Bethlehem, where he lived until the end of the Century XIX. In the year 1989, the old man wrote *The Life of Archimandrite Irinarh Rosetti*, as Irinarh himself foretold him while he was alive, and Nectareous sent that work to the Metropolitanate from Bucharest, in order to be printed and published.

Lo what Archimandrite Nectareous says in the *Preface* to that writing:

"Right now, at my old age, for I am 80 years old and my hand trembles and my sight has weakened, I have written this with big efforts. But I know that I've made many translation mistakes and spelling mistakes. And I pray with much humbleness the taught and skilled teachers, spiritual and lay parts, to correct my mistakes with the ghost of the gentleness, and to forgive the stupid me because I wasn't able to translate and to write as well as possible these text that I am presenting you. This is because, despite I am the son of Priest Alexandru from Călineşti, a village that is near to Roman City, as at some two or three hours of walking, but I became orphan of both parents when I was a child and I had nobody to send me to school, but only by the gift of God I have learnt a little form some brother. Then, when I was 15, I went to Horaiţa Monastery and I was made monk by Father Irinarh, in order I to be able at least to save my soul, if I am not worthy of advising others towards salvation...".

After forty years of harsh ascesis on Tabor, Archimandrite Nectareous Banul moved to the eternal resting in Saint Sava Monastery, and he was buried next to the other Romanian loving-of Christ monks.

BISHOP MELCHIZEDEK ŞTEFĂNESCU
Roman Bishopric
(1823-1892)[277]

The venerable Bishop Melchizedek of Roman was one of the most enlightened hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church from the second half of the Century XIX.

Originating from Gîrcina Commune, Neamţ County, the young Michael – according to his baptism name – was the first born of the eleven children of

[277] Bishop Gherontie of Constanța, *Bishop Melchizedek, Described by a Few of His Disciples*, Bucharest, 1939; *Bishop* Bishop Veniamin Pocitan Ploieșteanul, *Melchizedek as Member of the Holy Synod*, Bucharest, 1939; Fr. Prof. Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Church*, Sibiu, 1972, pp. 329-334; His Eminence Eftimie of Roman and Huși, *Melchizedek, Bishop of Romani*, 1982.

priest Petrache and of presbyter Anastasia Ştefănescu. His father was a good priest and a true servant of the Church of Christ. He shepherded the people form Gîrcina Commune, for 50 years. And hisn mnother was "a role-model of the virtues of the country woman, especially, of the wife of the country priest". Providing their children with a chosen Christian education, five of them embraced the monastic life.

The first called by Christ was Michael himself. Between the years 1834-1838 he studied at the Seminary from Socola – Iaşi. After being, for four years, a teacher in the village, in the year 1843 he continued his studied and he was appointed as professor of rhetoric, pastoral, history, and geography, at the seminary, proving himself to be a talented teacher and catechiser. In the same year he received the tonsuring in monasticism under the name Melchizedek, and in the next year he was ordained hierodeacon.

Being gifted by God with much wisdom and with an exemplary spiritual life, between the years 1848-1851 Hierodeacon Melchizedek continues his studies at the Theological Academy from Kiev, that was founded by Metropolitan Petru Movilă. Then he was ordained Hieromonk and appointed professor of patristics, canonical law, liturgics, and compared theology at Socola, where he functioned until the year 1856. Verily, Archimandrite Melchizedek Ştefănescu was an eminent professor of the Socola Seminary, a devoted servant of the Church of Christ, and an unmatched pedagogue and spiritual father of the future candidates to priesthood. Numerous students taught by him reached to be good priests, abbots, professors, and chosen hierarchs in Moldavia.

Archimandrite Melchizedek, through his personality and culture, he elevated Socola Seminary – the first theological seminary from our country (founded in the year 1803) and the first gymnasium school from the Romanian Principalities having the teaching in Romanian – on the level of a true Romanian theological academy. There were educated over a thousand of good priests for the Church of Christ, prepared, with parental care, by this great pedagogue.

Between the years 1857-1859, Archimandrite Melchizedek acted zealously in the direction of the Union of the Romanian Principalities, using, with much wisdom, both his position as professor and the pulpit. He used to invoke as foundation for the Romanian's Union the words of our Savio Who says: "As You, Father, into me, and I into You, so these ones to be one into Us" (Jn. 17: 21). He proved by word and by deed that the union of the Romanian brothers, belonging to the same nationality and speaking the same language, of the same faith and Christian living, it was an evangelical holy duty, according to the model of the Trinitarian unity, and according to the unity of the saints form heavens. The Romanian's unity, he said, it will bring not only the national strengthening and the scattering of the strife among brothers, but on the same measure it will bring the strengthening of the Romanian orthodoxy, in order to

resist the foreign religious proselytism which was attempting to divide the Nation and our apostolic Church.

At the end of the year 1862, Archimandrite Melchizedek was ordained hierarch and appointed lieutenant bishop at Huşi. In January 1865 he was appointed Bishop of the Lower Danube, an eparchy which he shepherded with chosen spiritual care for fifteen years. His first preoccupation, as bishop, was that for building churches in villages and to appoint enlightened priests who feared God, in all the parishes from his eparchy. Bishop Melchizedek undertook regular visits to villages and to cities, he consecrated new churches, he taught the believers to preserve the right-faith with holiness and to live a Christian life, full of love and of good deeds. The new Bishop took a special care of the widows, of the orphans, and of the poor peasants, whom he gave alms according to his possibilities and whom he comforted with parental words. Being a profound connoisseur of the Holy Scripture and of the teaching of the Holy Fathers, and being endowed by God with the gift of a nice speech, Bishop Melchizedek proved himself to be a tireless preacher and apostle of Christ. He requested the same thing from the priests: an exemplary moral life, religious service according to the rule, and tireless preaching of the word of God.

In the spring of the year 1879, Bishop Melchizedek was summoned to shepherd the Roman Eparchy, which he led with the same dignity and spiritual wisdom for more than thirteen years.

As great organizer of the churchly businesses, and as an enlightened pedagogue, Bishop Melchizedek gave a great amplitude to Roman Seminary. He wanted the priests to be as enlightened as possible to their mind and living a chosen life, in order they to be to the believers both apostles and spiritual fathers, and also teachers. He personally paid for the scholar fees for poor but zealous students, and he admitted others as scholarship holders. Many among his disciples, who graduated Roman Seminary, they reached to be renowned priests, missionaries, professors, and bishops. Also, with his blessing, there were built new churches in villages, which he personally consecrated, and were renewed monasteries and hermitages as: Bogdana, Sihastru, and Măgura from Bacău Country, or like Buluc, Tarniţa, Lepşa, and others from Vrancea Country. He personally helped to building schools for the enlightenment of the people, and at Roman Hospital, in addition to his usual spiritual visits, he granted subventions for helping the poor.

Being one of the most taught hierarchs of his time, and a profound theologian, Bishop Melchizedek had an important spiritual role in the life of the Romanian Church. Thus, he contributed much to the Union of the two local churches form Moldavia and from The Romanian Country, reaching, in the year 1865, to assembly together, in Bucharest, for the first time, a General Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church. He also contributed personally to composing some rule-books fore the monastic and for the churchly disciplines, for the theological education, for electing the hierarchs, for revising and editing the churchly books, as also for defending the Orthodox faith on the land of our country, the only *true apostolic faith*.

Bishop Melchizedek had an important contribution also to composing the Organic Law from the year 1872, which the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church was constituted through. Also, as result of his perseverance, consequently to his memorandum addressed to the Ecumenical Patriarchy from Constantinople, it was sanctified, for the first time in our country, the Holy and Great Chrism, in the year 1882. The Great Hierarch had a great contribution also to achieving the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church. As consequence to the Synodal Act composed by him with a great wisdom, in the spring of the year 1885, it was recognized the autocephaly of our Church.

Bishop Melchizedek wrote, also, numerous books with theological, pastoral, apologetic, and historic contents. Among those we are mentioning here: *The Liturgics*, *The Typicon*, *The Introduction to Theological Sciences*, *The Introduction to the Holy Books of the Old and New Testament* (2 tomes) (1860); *The Pastoral Theology*, *The Chronicle of the City and of the Bishopric of Huşi* (1869); *The Chronicle of the City and of the Bishopric of Roman*, 2 volumes (1874-1875); *The Papacy and the Present State of the Orthodox Church from Romania* (1883); *The Orthodox Church Fighting the Protestantism* (1890); *About the Miraculous Icons from Athos, of Romanian Origin* (1883); *Historical and Archaeological Notes from 48 Monasteries and Antique Churches from Moldavia* (1885); *The Life and the Writings of Grigorie Ţamhlac* (1883); *The Life of the Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul* (1886), and others books.

After a life full of toils and temptations, of spiritual joys, and of no few trials he endured for the honor of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and for the benefit of the believers, on 16th of May 1892, Bishop Melchizedek yielded his soul in the hand of the Great Hierarch Christ. With the donation he left behind, in the following years, according to his will, there were built a kindergarten and a school for churchly singers, next to the Bishopric, where were admitted only orphan children who benefited of total gratuitousness.

HIEROSCHEMAMONK NEPHON IONESCU
The True Founder of the Romanian Hermitage Prodromul – Mount Athos
(1807-1901)

Pious Nephon the Hieroschemamonk was the first and the real founder of the Romanian Hermitage Prodromul, from Mount Athos.

He was born in Vaslui Country to poor but strong believer parents. Hearing about the Abbot of Horaiţa Monastery, Archimandrite Irinarh Rosetti, in the year 1826, he entered that community and he was made monk by that Abbot, under the name Nathanael. In the year 1840 he left for Mount Athos together with Monk Nectareous from the same monastery. They lived in ascesis, in the first place, in Cutlumuş Monastery. Then they bought a

monastic cell in Saint Anna Hermitage. There, Father Nathanael became Schemamonk, under the name Nephon.

Gathering many monks around him, among whom some were coming from Horaiţa Monastery, Schemamonk Nephon, helped by his beloved Nectareous, bought a bigger monastic cell near to the sea, at a place called Chiraşa, on the estate of Lavra Monastery, and he moved there with his disciples.

In the year 1850, Fathers Nephon and Nectareous came to Moldavia, they were ordained priests, and they asked Metropolitan Sophron Miclescu and Voivode Grigorie Ghica for help, in order to build a Romanian Hermitage on Mount Athos. As Consequence to the help they received, namely 3500 golden coins, and consequently to the intervention towards the Lavra Monastery, the leadership of that monastery recognized the Vigla Ianicopoii monastic cell as Romanian Hermitage. There previously were abbots there, Pious Justin the Confessor and Patapios, his disciple, between the years 1810-1825, but the monastic cells built by them reached to be derelict.

In the year 1852, Hieroschemamonks Nephon and Nectareous laid down the foundation of the church of Prodromul Hermitage, with the patronage of the baptism of the Lord. Eight years later, in the year 1860, the church was already painted. In the same year, Hierarch Sava Vicol (who was Bishop of Roman between the years 1868-1878), accompanied by a few clerics and by two hundred pilgrims from the country, he consecrated the new church and he appointed the Hieroschemamonk Nephon as abbot of Prodromul Hermitage. As the Romanian monks become more numerous in that hermitage, Fathers Nephon and Nectareous gathered new material help from the country and they built two stories two monastic cells blocks, on the north-west and on the east sides.

In addition to taking care of organizing the activity, Pious Nephon, the founder of Prodromul Hermitage, he took care also of strengthening the spiritual life from within his community. First, he gathered around him the best Romanian monks who were living in ascesis, at that time, on Athos Mountain, among who was the famous psalms singer Nectareous the Schemamonk. Also, the tasks, the feeding, and the maintenance were totally communal.

The confession of the community, which counted up to 100 fathers and brothers, it was done regularly, on a weekly basis, and the Holy Impartation for the elderly and for schemamonks was provided also weekly. For the sick ones, the Abbot built an infirmary and he appointed monks as caretakers, and for the young and talented ones he formed a school for churchly music, famous all-over Mount Athos, under the leadership of the great Romanian teacher and chief-singer Schemamonk Nectareous Creţulescu. Thus, under the abbotship of Hieroschemamonk Nephon Ionescu, Podrumul Hermitage was living its most peaceful epoque of harmony and of spiritual flourishment from its entire history.

But, in the year 1870 Father Nephon resigned form abbotship and came back to the country. Here he founded the Bucium Hermitage from Iaşi, as unit subordinated to Prodromul Hermitage,

(In the source text we have at our disposal, in a scanned PDF, the pages 480-482 are missing[278].)

METROPOLITAN IOSIF NANIESCU
Of Moldavia and of Suceava
(1818-1902)

a. His Life

This Great Metropolitan of Moldavia – Iosif II, Naniescu – called also as "the holy and merciful", he was the brightest Hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church from the second half of the Century XIX, next to Saint Calinic from Cernica.

He was the son of Priest Anania (Nane) Mihalache and of the presbyter Theodosia, from Răzălâi-Bălţi Village, born on 15th of June 1818. When he was two years old, his father died and his mother remained widow raising two children, John and Jeremiah. I the year 1831, Hierodeacon Theophylact was appointed Abbot to Saint Prophet Samuel Monastery, from Focşani, where he brought his nephew too. In the year 1835, Hierodeacon Theophylact was appointed ecclesiarch to the Buzău Bishopric, under the famous Bishop Caesarius, together with the young John.

On 23rd of January 1835, Rasophore John was tonsured in monasticism under the name Iosif, in the Episcopal Cathedral, and on the second day he was ordained deacon. As disciple of Bishop Caesarius, in the year 1836, Hierodeacon Iosif Naniescu had been admitted to the Seminary from Buzău, which he graduated in the year 1840. Then, between the years 1840-1847 he studied at Saint Sava College from Bucharest.

In the year 1849 he was appointed abbot to Şerbăneştii Morunglavului Monastery – Rîmnicu Vîlcea, and on 29th of August 1850 he was ordained priest in Bucharest.

In November 1852 he was made protosyncellus by Saint Calinic, the Bishop of Rîmnic. In the year 1857 he was appointed abbot to Găinşenii Monastery – Dîmboviţa, and after 4 years he was made archimandrite by Metropolitan Nephon and appointed Abbot to Sărindar Monastery from Bucharest. Between the years 1864-1870 Archimandrite Iosif Naniescu activated as religion professor at Gheorghe Lazăr Gymnasium, and at Matei Basarab High School from Bucharest, and during the last two years (1870-1871) he was principal to the Central Seminary.

[278] (E. l. t.'s n.)

On 23rd of April 1872, Archimandrite Iosif Naniescu was ordained Hierarch, and in January 1873 he was appointed Bishop of Argeş. On 10th of June 1875, he was elected Metropolitan of Moldavia, and on 6th of July, the same year, he was installed in Iaşi. For 27 years, the Venerable Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu shepherded, with rare gentleness and wisdom, the Moldavia Metropolitanate. There he understood the richest spiritual, theological, pastoral, and social activity, from the whole his life, remaining to his descendants a living and hard to follow example.

On 26th of January 1902, Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu, "the holiest and the most merciful", he left his spiritual sons and he moved to the heavenly dwelling places, in order to stay in front of the Great Hierarch Jesus Christ. His tomb in situated on the southern side of the Metropolitan Cathedral which he finished to build.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. On the day which Rasophore Ioan Naniescu he was tonsured in monasticism, Bishop Caesarius held a short speech to him, telling him:

- I've given you the name of Iosif, the name of my abbot. If you are a nice man, you will reach to be like him!

Rightly so, the words of the Great Bishop came to abundant completion in the life of his disciple.

2. They said about Metropolitan Iosif that, when he was a student at the Seminary from Buzău and at the Saint Sava College, he had a very chosen spiritual behavior and he was studying so well that he surpassed all his colleagues, both with the learning and with the living. That's why he was loved both by professors and by students.

3. At the burial of Bishop Caesarius – his spiritual father -, on 30th of November 1846, the young Hierodeacon Iosif Naniescu uttered a gratitude and appreciation speech so moving that all the people present there kissed him in tears.

4. They also said about him that he was a pious servant of the Church and an unmatched singer. He had learnt the churchly music from the Great Teacher and Chief-Singer Hieromonk Makarios. When he was singing in the pew, his gentle voice was filling the church up, it was moving the hearts and it was drawing out tears.

5. This humble and worthy-of-being-remembered servant of the Church of Christ also had a great zeal for the holy services. He always officiated the Godlike Liturgy with joy and having his eyes watered by tears. He was, also, an unmatched preacher and a skilled confessor, searched for by many people, for his gentleness and for his words. As long as he was abbot to diverse monasteries, he raised numerous spiritual sons, both laypeople and monks.

6. For eight years as he was religion professor, Archimandrite Iosif Naniescu was the most loved among professors. The students followed him and cherished him as a true spiritual father. He knew well the Holy Scripture and

he was a consummate teacher and catechizer. His words stuck to everybody's heart.

7. In addition to his other gifts, Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu had also the gift of the holy humbleness and obedience. He saw God in each man and he received everything as from God's hand. On 10th of June 1875, when he was elected Metropolitan of Moldavia, among other things he also said these:

- The duties of the high ecclesiastic position, to which the godlike Providence, by the votes of your holiness calls me today, I know and I am confessing with the whole humbleness that they are above my powers.

8. After he was elected father and shepherd of Moldavia, Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu left Bucharest for Iaşi, by train, for getting installed. It was Sunday night, 6th of July 1875. He fell fast asleep and he dreamt of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi who, gettign closer to him, he was advising him to finish the building of the Cathedral from Iaşi, a building started by Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi. During the same night, the confessor of the Metropolitanate from Iaşi, Archimandrite Ieroftei Maximescu, had the same dream.

Still being far from destination, Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu saw as around the building of the big church started by Veniamin, there were two monks having their beards shining like silver and walking around that building. He drew near to them, without being seen, and he noticed that one of them was Himself Metropolitan Veniamin, whom he recognized by face, but he didn't recognize the other monk. And Metropolitan Veniamin was telling, with a pained voice, to the other companion of his, how that church started to be built by him and remained unfinished was then about to be auctioned by his descendants. "To tear down and to sell what I bought and built". And the tears of the Metropolitan didn't stop flowing until, after finishing to go around the church, they disappeared.

The morning came and the confessor was tormented by that dream and he wanted to find out the name of the other monks who was accompanying Veniamin. And he was very glad that, on the same day, he recognized him in the person of Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu. He was that one walking, pensive, and answering nothing to the lamentations of Metropolitan Veniamin.

9. The first care of the new Father of Moldavia was that for finishing the Cathedral, started to be built in the year 1833, by his forerunner, Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi. But, because the country was preparing for the Independence War, the gentle hierarch postponed the starting of the work. For two years he strived to encourage the believers and the entire clergy to the right fight for national independence and for the church. Thus, he appealed to all monasteries and priests to gather donations for the army, and he sent those who wanted that to serve on ambulances for taking care of the wounded soldiers. At the appeal of the Metropolitan all monasteries and many parishes contributed with donations, and for taking care of the wounded soldiers, over a hundred priests, monks, and nuns left Moldavia for the front line.

10. In the year 1879, after the war had ended, Metropolitan Iosif went in audience to the First Minister to ask for help, for finishing the building of the Cathedral. So, entering the minister's office, he said:

- I ask you for a small favor, but which is very important to us. Namely, give us money for finishing the metropolitan Cathedral from Iaşi, which has been in a state of dereliction for 40 years, and which the people's cattle sleep at night.

- We don't have money for that right now! The cashier of the national treasury answered him.

- If a country has not enough money to build a cathedral, I will resign from Metropolitanate. Please, take my staff!

Seeing the zeal of the Great Hierarch for the House of the Lord, the members of the government approved, on the same day, the finances, and the building of the cathedral started immediately.

11. The first care of Metropolitan Iosif, after finishing the Cathedral, it was that of bringing there the remnants of its firs founder, Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, from Slatina Monastery, as sign of gratitude and of love into Christ. This move was done on 30th of December 1886.

12. on 23 of April 1887, on the Celebration Day of Saint Great Martyr George, it was consecrated the new Metropolitan Cathedral from Iaşi, by 12 hierarchs, in the presence of tens of thousands of believers. On that feast day the Metropolitan live his most happy day of his life, and he uttered a sermon in the church, a parental word, inspired by the Holy Ghost, one that touched everybody's heart.

13. The second work of his forerunner saved by Metropolitan Iosif was the Veniamin Costachi Seminary from Socola. Not having it own building where to function in, it was functioning in the merchants' houses, paying a rent. Seeing that, the good Metropolitan bought the palace of the former Voivode Mihail Sturdza from Iaşi, he repaired that building, and he moved the seminary into it. On the inauguration of the new location, the Metropolitan uttered these words, worthy of being remembered:

- Veniamin's child ended at the people's doors! Shame on you, Church! Shame of you, country! Veniamin, I've revenged you! Today, I've installed you in the palace of that one who upset you and made you leave to monastery!

15. Metropolitan Iosif had, since his childhood, a special awe for the holy relics of Pious Parascheva from Iaşi. Those holy relics were preserved in the chapel of Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery. But, during the night of 27th of December 1888, the chapel caught fire and the holy relics were engulfed in flames. So, the Metropolitan heard about that and came there barefoot and, seeing how was burning in fire the most precious jewellery of Moldavia, he was crying like a child. But, after the fire had been quenched, the relics of Saint Parascheva were found unharmed. Only the silver clothing got melted down. Seeing that, the good shepherd made another silver tabernacle for the holy

relics and he moved them into the new Cathedral, as one can see up to these days.

16. This Venerable Metropolitan loved much the churchly singing. He adorned the altars with the most pious servants and the churches' pews were full of best chief-singers. He was the first Romanian hierarch who blessed the organization of the vocal choir in the church, and he allowed the women to sing, opposing those who were against that, answering them:

- You, pious! At the tomb of our Savior remained only the women, because all the men ran away! The women were the first ones to announce the Resurrection of the Lord!

17. The most chosen deeds of the Metropolitan Iosif were these two: the holiness of his life and the giving of alms. With these two great virtues he surpassed all the hierarchs of his time, he conquered the callous hearts, he gathered around him the poor and disregarded, and he drew towards Christ many Christians by the example of his life.

18. They said about him that he was very temperate and with right-reckoning in everything. He slept a little at night and he prayer much. Each morning, at five o'clock, when the bell ringed for Matins, he was the first to get up. Then he was counting the rings of the bell from the tower, if it rang three times forty rings. After prayer he was reading the life of the saint from that day, and then he put on his monastic coat and came to the church.

19. The fathers from the Metropolitanate who were his disciples said that Metropolitan Iosif came daily to the Holy Liturgy, to Vespers, and to Matins. He was missing only if he had left for some place of if he had been ill. The fathers first heard the semantron, and then the rhythmical beats of the Metropolitan's staff on the mosaic of the church.

20. They also said about him that he liked to listen in the church the reading of *The Book of Psalms* and the singing from the pew. On the work days he was singing together with the singers: verses, troparia, praises, and others, which had been learnt even by laymen. But he loved the most to sing the Blessings and the songs of the Holy Liturgy, for Metropolitan Iosif was living the joy of the Holy Liturgy.

21. Often, the good Shepherd was undertaking canonical visits to monasteries, to hermitages, and to parishes. He was consecrating churches and ordaining priests, he was uttering chosen sermons, and he was giving spiritual advice, but he never brought back to Iași the gifts bestowed him by believers. He was sharing all those gifts to widows and orphans.

- To us God has given abundance, he used to say. Let's give to the deprived!

22. A beloved quietude place of the gentle Hierarch was Sihla Hermitage. There he went, each summer, with his deacons, and they used to hike to the cave of Saint Theodora, they were officiating the Vespers there, and then he ordered a deacon to sing the threefold litany and the great praise above the rocks. At the end, they all were singing "Your chamber, You Savior…", and then they descended back to Neamț Monastery.

23. About this pious shepherd of souls, one of his disciples said:

- Metropolitan Iosif had three great qualities, I could say apostolic qualities, for he was daily cogitating only at his pastoral duties. His strong faith in Lord Christ was strengthening him in the fights of his life, it urged him to commit his great and virtuous deeds. I always found him reading the Holy Scripture, and he told me:

- From here I learn everything, just like the great ascetic Anthony, who had no other book but the sky and the earth, contemplating them.

24. The greatest good deed of Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu, by which he became known to and loved by everybody, it was his giving of alms, his great work of Christian charity. He had his door and his hand open for giving alms. Each year he clothed tens of students and he fed them at the Metropolitanate's kitchen. Hundreds other students received form him money for books and for scholar fees. His example was followed also by the other servants of the Cathedral, as there were Monk Hillary Radu, Archdeacon Barlaam Arghirescu, Archimandrite Ioanichie Grădinaru, and others.

25. One of his disciples said:

- The mercy on the poor of Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu reached to be proverbial in Moldavia and all-over the country. Daily, tens of poor people came to receive alms from his hands. At the beginning, he descended by himself the staircase of his monastic cell in the middle of the hundred poor people, he comforted them with his words, he blessed them, and he shared them money. He never gave to a poor less money than the price of a bread. "Money for a bread!" – this was his principle. If he finished the change, he pulled out of his pockets the big money and he comforted everybody. Then he went up to his monastic cell for prayer and for reading. When he was old and weak, he no longer descended himself but he threw his alms from the balcony of his house.

26. The same disciple also said:

- This was his giving of alms on the work days. On Sundays the Metropolitan was sharing his alms thus: he gave the purse with specially appointed money to Father Bessarion Boboc, the steward of the Metropolitanate. After the religious service, the steward sat at the back door of the Metropolitanate. There were passing all the poor people and received help from their spiritual father.

So was Metropolitan Iosif sharing his salary, on a daily basis, to the poor.

27. His disciple also said these:

- Monthly, there came to receive alms from him also Barbu Lăutaru, the famous singer from Iaşi, and he received alms. After giving him alms, Metropolitan Iosif was asking him to sing the verse from the Lent: "Dop not punish me, Master...". There also was coming Rubenshaft the Jew, regularly, on Friday, for alms. With the help from the Metropolitan, he was able to keep his son in school, and his son became a doctor and a Christian. Another Jew from Iaşi was coming every three years, only to him, for asking him for help. "With the help of the Metropolitan Iosif – he said – I was able to give my three

daughters in marriage". By that, the good shepherd was imitating Saint Hierarch Nicholas.

28. On a feast-day, the disciple said, when the Metropolitan exited the church, with the city's rich people accompanying him, the poor people surrounded him. And he, in order to hide his good deed, he was throwing them alms and telling them harshly:

- Ask from the rich people, ask from the rich people, because they have taken the dowry of the Church, your dowry...! Why do you come to us?

29. During the whole year Metropolitan Iosif was helping students of all ages, without refusing anybody. He gave them food, he paid their scholar fees, he gave them pocket money. He supported from his salary even students studying abroad. The dining room from next to Metropolitan's kitchen was a true school cafeteria. For those who distinguished themselves by obtaining high grades at exams, he sent old man Alexander to buy for them a complete set of good clothes and books, as prize. And for those who didn't pass their exams, the order was to give them a bread and to send them home.

30. Once a student came to Metropolitan and told him:

- We are three students from the country side and we all are accommodated in a small rented room that has only one bed. We are forced to sleep in shifts. Now we don't have money to pay for the scholar fee and for the rent. Please, give us a small help!

The Metropolitan, after giving him something to eat, he sent his deacon Barlaam, to ascertain what the situation was. Then he sent him back with money for the whole year.

- Lo, the deacon told them, the Metropolitan has sent 300 hundred units of currency to each of you, in order you to be able to continue your studies.

31. On some other occasion, a woman from the country side came to him, crying.

- Why are you crying? he asked her.

- My cow died and I have seven children.

- Here you are, mother, take this money and buy another cow.

31. The Cathedral's priests said that, on occasions, Metropolitan Iosif ran out of money and he had no more money to give alms to the poor. Then he was borrowing money form his confessor, Archimandrite Ieroftei, and so he was able to comfort everyone. At the end of the month, when he received his salary, he firstly paid back his debts, and then he continued giving alms to the people who came and asked for help.

33. One day a man, crying, came to confess his sins.

- Why are you crying, my son? the Metropolitan asked him. what sins have you committed?

- Your eminence, I have served as priest without being I priest. I have baptized, I have received confessions, I have officiated burial services, I have officiated the Holy Liturgy, I have imparted people with the Holy Mysteries. I have committed the gravest sin! I don't believe that God will forgive me and so I have lost my soul.

After thinking for a little while, the Metropolitan told him:

-Prepare yourself and come on Sunday and I will ordain you deacon and priest.

So reckoned the good shepherd to save a soul from death and not to offend the rightly-believer people.

34. This Venerable Metropolitan was very poor and modestly clothed, for he had insufficient money for vestments. Some ministers saw him wearing a worn-up coat, they sent to him, instead of his salary, a new set of monastic clothes. But Metropolitan Iosif, for he loved the poverty of Christ, he sold those clothes and shared the money to the poor.

35. On one occasion, the Metropolitan was going to attend the Synod's assembly. On the train, a certain priest met him and asked him:

- Where are you going, father?

- Here and there, going down!

When getting closer to arrival, the Metropolitan took his coat, his hat, his engolpion, and his staff, and started going to the door. The priest realized that he was hierarch, and he also saw other hierarchs saluting him, and, because of being ashamed, that priest disappeared from sight.

36. On some other occasion there came a boyar who hadn't seen him in a long while:

- So, sir, where have you been this summer?

- Your Eminence, Master, I have been abroad for getting my health checked.

- I wonder, how comes that you lose your health in the country but you go and search for it abroad?

37. They say about him that he was praying and reading much, he ate only a little, and he was very modest and temperate in everything. And he was cherishing the time the most, and he used his time according to a very rigorous schedule. Wherever he went, he was taking with himself an alarm clock, and the icon of our Savior Jesus Christ.

38. The gentleness, the wisdom, and the mercifulness of Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu made him known and loved by everybody. When in Synod, at the government, in his eparchy, in Iaşi, he was everywhere honored and respected. Everybody was waiting for him they were praying him to speak, and they followed his advice. His word was weighing the most in all discussions.

39. The most valuable thing Metropolitan Iosif had was a rich library, which he later on personally donated it to the Romanian Academy. The only books which accompanied him until his death were *The Holy Scripture*, *The Book of Hours*, and *The Lives of the Saint*.

40. On 26th of January 1902, the Great Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu, this John the Merciful of the Romanian Orthodox Church, moved to Christ, in the group of the Holy Hierarchs, being mourned by all the poor, the students, the priests, the monks, and the believers from Moldavia. They found only two currency units in his monastic cell!

As gratitude, the people canonized him, calling him "The Metropolitan of Moldavia, Iosif the Saint".

SCHEMA-NUNS FEVRONIA, SOPHIA, AND OLIMPIADA IURAŞCU
Agafton Monastery – Botoşani Country
(† 1902)

These three nuns were sisters according to their lineage, with the mother of the poet Mihai Eminescu. Their parents from Ipoteşti Village had three daughters, whom they raised in the fear of God. Three of them became monks at Agafton Monastery, and two of them married and remained in their natal village.

The first to go to monastery was Mother Fevronia, in the year 1850. Tow years later she brought also her middle sister, Mother Sophia. Mothers Fevronia and Sophia were ascetics, and they lived in deep ascesis in the monastic cells, by daily reading *The Book of Psalms*, by fasting, and by doing prostrations. Mother Olimpiada took care, in addition to the spiritual aspects, of working the garden, of fulfilling general tasks, of cooking, and of welcoming and accommodating the visiting worshippers. Their disciples told that these three nuns were a role-model in Agafton Monastery, to the other 150 nuns, for they were praying and fasting together, they went to the church together, and they lived in much humbleness and love.

Around the year 1880, Mothers Fevronia and Sophia brought to monastery one more niece of theirs, the daughter of a sister of theirs from Ipoteşti, called Safta Velizarie. She later on reached to be a famous monk, under the name Xenia[279].

In addition to prayer and to manual labor, the three nuns were occupying themselves with copying and reading the holy books[280]. When women from the surrounding villages came to visit the three nuns, Mothers Fevronia and Sophia appointed one of their disciples to read to the visitors, useful words from the Holy Scripture, from *Paterikon*, or from *The Lives of the Saints*. After they had comforted their visitors souly, they released them to go in peace. These three nuns provided their nephew Mihai Eminescu with a chosen education; he often came a visited them to their monastic cells where he occupied himself with writing and reading.

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[279] Fr. Al. Simionescu, *The History of Agafton Monastery*, Botoșani, 1929; The Testimony of Nun Agafia Moisa, the disciple of those nuns, currently living in Slatina-Suceava Monastery, aged 96. (At the time of the source text was written, E. l. t.'s n.)

[280] At the Library of the Romanian Academy is preserved a miscellaneous Paterikon in manuscript, quote no. 1064, written at Neamț Monastery in the year 1742, that was initially owned by Fr. Basil from Botoșani, in the year 1844, and later one owned by Nuns Fevronia, Sophia, and Olimpiada Iurașcu. On the bottom of page no. 92, there is an autograph note by poet Mihai Eminescu, the nephew of the nuns. See the catalogue, vol. IV, Romanian manuscripts, BAR, p. 20.

In the year 1895, Schema-Nun Fevronia moved to the eternal life. Two years later, her sister, Schema-Nun Sophia passed away too. And in the year 1898 the community of the Agafton Monastery chose as abbot the humble nun Olimpiada Iurașcu, who was leading the community with gentleness and with wisdom, for five years. In the year 1902 Nun Olimpiada moved to the eternal life, peacefully, and she was buried next to her sisters.

PIOUS NECTAREOUS THE CHIEF-SINGER
The Romanian Hermitage Prodomul – Mount Athos
(1808-1898)[281]

a. His Life

Schemamonk Nectareous Creţu was one of the most spiritually improved Romanian monks living in ascesis, over centuries, at Mount Athos. He was born at Huşi City, to a family of believer peasants, who has several children. He was baptized Nicholas. His older brother Alexander was already monk at Ciolanu Monastery – Buzău, under the name Atanasius.

Between the years 1840-1842, Bishop Sophron Miclescu took the young Nicholas Creţu to the Huşi Bishopric, together with other young men, where they learnt the typicon and the churchly music. Later on, Nicholas reached to be churchly singer to a church from Galaşi. After a short time, he was taken by his brother to Ciolanu Monastery and dressed up rasophore. From there, both brothers went on a trip to Mount Athos, and to Jerusalem, but they turned back after to Neamţ Monastery. There, Abbot Neonil tonsured Nicholas in monasticism, under the name Nectareous.

Around the year 1845, Schemamonks Nectareous and Athanasius left, definitively, for the Holy Mountain, where they bought a small monastic cell, near to the sea, on the eastern side of Mount Athos, at a place called Vigla. The two brothers lived in ascesis, in that hermit-like shack, for 16 years. Nectareous reached to be the greatest singer and chief-singer from Mount Athos from the second half of Century XIX.

In the year 1862, after the consecration of the church form Prodromul Hermitage, Fathers Nectareous and Athanasius left the living into wilderness and came to the Hermitage, together with other Romanian monks, where they remained until their death.

b. Deeds and Teaching words

1. Young Nicholas, being adorned by God with the gift of the beautiful singing, he was taken, at a young age, to Huşi Bishopric, in order him to learn there the churchly music. Thus, in a short time, he learnt so well the

[281] Prof. C. Erbiceanu, "The Life of Father Schemamonk Nectareous the Chief-Singer, Saint Mount Athos", in *B.O.R.*, 1889, pp. 410-414; Fr. V. Nicolau, *A Trip to Constantinople and to Mount Athos* Ploiești, 1907; Hierarch Veniamin Pocitae, *Saint Mountain of Athos, on the Occasion of a Trip in East*, Bucharest, 1939.

craftsmanship of the churchly singing, that he surpassed all the chief-singers of the Bishopric.

2. While he was singer at Dormition of the Mother of the Lord church, from Galaţi, his brother who was a monk in Ciolanu Monastery, heard about his brother's talent. So, least the young ascetic slide on a bad road, Athanaius immediately mounted a horse and went to Galaţi and he told to his brother:

- Aren't you Nicholas Creţu from Huşi?

- Yes, I am, the young man answered him.

- I am your brother, Athanasius.

- I have heard that I have a brother who is a monk, but I haven't known him.

- I am your brother, Father Athanasius answered him. Come with me to monastery! And they immediately left for Ciolanu Monastery.

3. The abbot of the monastery saw the humbleness of young Nicholas and the beauty of his singing, he clothed him up in monastic vestments, and he appointed him to sing in the church. Then, as the patron day of the Căldăruşani Monastery arrived, Rasophore Nicholas and his brother Atanasius from Ciolacu Monastery were invited to participate to the festivities. There Rasophore Nicholas amazed everybody with his voice and with the craftsmanship of his singing, so that Hieromonk Makarios wanted to take him to Bucharest Metropolitanate and appoint him there as teacher and chief-singer. But Father Athanasius and his brother Nicholas, because of not loving the honor and the glory of this world, they left everything behind and went to the Holy Mountain.

4. Rasophore Nicholas, because of being too young, he wasn't accepted to Mount Athos. Because of that, he left with his brother to bow down before the Tomb of the Lord, and then they turned back to Moldavia, to Neamţ Monastery. There, the abbot heard the beautiful singing of Rasophore Nicholas and his zeal for the holy religious services, so that he tonsured the young Nicholas in monasticism, immediately. Later on, after tarrying a little in the monastery, Fathers Athanasius and Nectareous were allowed to turn back again to Mount Athos.

5. At Vigla monastic cell, situated under the peak of Mount Athos, Father Nectareous and his brother lived for 16 years, in harsh ascesis, like the great Athonite hermits. The pious spent the whole week in prayer, not leaving his monastic cell, and on Sundays and on feast days he went to Prodromul Hermitage, which was being built at that time, and he was singing in church "like an angel into body".

6. They also said about him that starting with the beginning of the Lent he wasn't leaving his monastic cell until the Resurrection of the Lord. And he was staying inside his monastic cell, in fasting and in prayers, feeding himself "only with soaked chickpeas during these 40 days". And on the Holy Easter, both brothers were coming to Prodromul Hermitage and they were imparted with the Body and with the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. His disciples said about Father Nectareous that, while living into wilderness, he was bestowed by God with the gift of the tears and of the holy *Prayer to Jesus*, a prayer that is committed ceaselessly with the mind and with the heart. But about that secret work the old man didn't spoke ever.

8. Also, in that wilderness, Pious Nectareous learnt, consummately, the craftsmanship of the churchly singing of psalms. Being endowed by God with an angelic voice, and learning well the Greek language, he was singing so wonderfully as no other monk had ever song all over the Holy Mountain. That's why the Athonite monks were calling him "the second Cucuzel"; other were calling him "the Nightingale of the Holy Mountain"; the Romanian monks were calling him "the Nightingale of Moldavia".

9. Becoming known all over Mount Athos that "a Wallachian, called Nectareous, sings so wonderfully that there's no other like him", the Greek fathers were inviting him to their monasteries to sing on the imperial feasts, and they placed him among their chief-singers. And Father Nectareous, together with his brother Athanasius, they went there with love in order to extoll Christ.

10. Once, Pious Nectareous was invited on the patron's day of Iviru Monastery, the Dormition of the Mother of the Lord. There he sang so wonderfully that he conquered everybody with the gift given him by God. Hearing about that, the monks from Lavra Monastery called him on the monastery's patron day and on the day of Saint Athanasius of Athos. At the religious service of Lithia, they gave him to sing a beautiful song called "Matina". Sand Father Nectareous sang "with such a good composition and with a sweet and wonderful voice, that everybody there were running in to see who was the one singing", and they called him "the new Cucuzel".

11. On some other occasion, Fathers Nectareous and Athanasius left, on the Holy Easter, for Jerusalem, to bow down before the Holy Tomb of the Lord. There, Father Athanasius asked the proestos Greek fathers from there so accept his brother to sing at the Holy Tomb. But initially they didn't allow him because of reckoning that he wouldn't know how to sing. Finally, they allowed him to sing. And when Pious Nectareous started singing and extolling Christ, the pilgrims and the servants were climbing on the pews and on galleries in order to see who was singing, because they had never heard before such a wonderful singing.

12. The Athonite proestos Fathers, seeing that the name of Father Nectareous had become so famous all over Mount Athos, some of them became envious on him. So, on one occasion when he was invited to the celebration of patron's day at Iviru Monastery, a few chief-singers from Constantinople came so see who was the one called "the Wallachian Cucuzel". And Pious Nectareous was singing in the left pew, while the Greeks were singing in the right pew. At the end of the all-nigh-vigil, when the praised were near, the Greek chief-singers could no longer sing, because they got tired, and they left the church. But Father Nectareous, being strengthened by the Mother of the Lord, he kept singing until morning, until the end of the Liturgy, so that the pilgrims who

came to attend the patron's day were pilling up to the windows to hear him singing. At the end, all the proestos fathers there said:

- Truly, there's no other more consummate than Nectareous the Wallachian. He is chief-singer and teacher of the Holy Mountain.

13-14. For the gift of God that was inside Pious Nectareous, all the proestos fathers and monks of the Holy Mountains had great awe for him and they were calling him "the New Cucuzel", "chief-singer", "teacher", and "musico-loghiotatos", namely all-taught in music, all over Mount Athos. And no one dared to call himself as consummate singer before coming to be examined by Father Nectareous. If somebody composed a new song, he firstly brought that song to Father Nectareous so see it if it was a good song, and only after that that song was printed. Until his death, people form all quarters were coming to see him singing.

15. So lived Pious Nectareous in his monastic cell from Vigla, together with his brother Athanasius, in ceaseless prayer, in godlike songs, and in the comforting of the Holy Ghost, until the year 1862. Then they both settled down in the Prodromul Hermitage. And Schemamonk Nectareous remained to Prodromul Hermitage for 40 more years, until the end of his life, living in obedience, together will all the brothers and fathers from there.

16. His disciples were saying about Pious Nectareous also these words:

- We have never seen him laughing or joking, but always keeping his head bowed down and having his eyes watered by tears, thinking at the fearsome judgment of God that will come. He was often sighing, and he was shedding tears from his eyes. He constantly had the holy prayer in his mouth. He was a good carver of wooden crosses; he also knew how to knit fishing nets and how to spin thread.

17. His disciples also said about him that Father Nectareous had a great awe for All-Holly Birth-Giver of God. This was because, by Her help, he consummately learnt the churchly singing. Also, by Her power he was delivered form poisoning and from the envy form the people and form the cunning devils. For that, he composed the most exquisite axions in the honor of the Mother of the Lord, and on Her feast days "he was singing so beautifully, like an angel".

HIEROMONK IOSIF THE CHIEF SINGER
Neamţ Monastery
(† 1849?)

This pious father was the greatest teacher of churchly music of Neamţ Monastery, from the first half of Century XIX.

Originating from that area, Hieromonk Iosif from Neamţ, as he was called in the monastery, he took up the yoke of Christ in the great Moldavian monastery, around the year 1790. Being endowed by God with much wisdom and with the gift of singing beautifully, there he learnt from the old teachers

the spiritual knowledge and the craftsmanship of the churchly music. And he learnt the churchly music so well that, in a few years, he surpassed all the other teachers form Neamț Monastery. And he was singing so beautifully in the church that many came to hear him, for he was singing to God with a great piousness and with a true spiritual heart, and his voice filled the church up, it woke up the hearts, and it made people crying.

Being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, Hieromonk Iosif was, for 20 years, a great confessor and a chief singer and the most important teacher of traditional churchly music from Neamț Monastery. Under Abbot Paisius they were singing linear notes in the right pew, according to the Slavonic custom, and in the left pew they were singing old churchly music.

So, as Teacher Iosif saw the monks getting far from the old Byzantine music, which had been introduce in the Orthodox cult by Saint John Damascene (Centuries VIII-IX), he tried to adorn the church again with the churchly singing on eight voices. This was because The Romanian Countries had been using from the beginning, the churchly music brought either directly from Byzantium, or from Mount Athos through the mediation of the monks.

Pious Iosif replaced, definitively, from Neamț Monastery, the vocal music of Slavonic, and he composed songs on old churchly music and he formed famous disciples of old music in the monasteries from Neamț. The school founded by him at Neamț Monastery shined until the end of the Century XIX. He was reckoned as a great teacher and renewer of old churchly music in Moldavia, preparing thus the road for Hieromonk Gregory the Teacher, the true renewer of the Romanian churchly music.

In the *History of Neamț and Secu Monasteries* are written the followings, about Pious Iosif: "During the time when abbot was Dometian (1823-1834), who followed after Hilary (1818-1823), this monastery was very much adorned with Father Hieromonk Iosif the Teacher"[282]. And in the *Founders' Remembrance List of the Holy Neamț Monastery* are mentioned the following things about him: "he brought to Neamț Monastery the science and the teaching of the old music of the churchly songs, which he taught to many fathers"[283].

So, after adorning the church of Christ with chosen spiritual songs, and after finishing well the trip of his life, he moved to the heavenly dwelling places in the year 1840, leaving behind numerous disciples.

[282] Narcis Crețulescu, manuscript no. 164-1907, The Library of Neamț Monastery, p. 103.
[283] Manuscript no. 190 from the year 1846, f. 82 v., the Library of Neamț Monastery.

SCHEMA-NUN OLIMPIADA
The Founder of Văratec Monastery
(1757-1842)

This zealous nun was the daughter of a priest from Iaşi City. At the due age, she married. But her husband died, so that she left the worries of the world and she went to serve Christ at Topoliţa Monastery from Neamţ Country. There she became rasophore, receiving the name Olimpiada that replaced her baptism name Bălaşa. The, after he had heard about the great confessor Iosif and about the quietude from Durau Hermitage, she moved there, under the obedience of Schemamonk Nazaria. She lived for many years in ascesis at Durau, in silence, in prayer, and in cutting off her own will.

But her soul craved for erecting a holy monastery in the honor of the All-Holy Birth Giver of God. That's why, after taking blessing, she left in search for an appropriate place isolated from the world. And after she had found a peaceful place in Văratec Forests, at the advice of Pious Iosif the Hermit, she started the building of a small wooden church there, in the year 1785. So was founded Văratec hermitage for nuns. In the year 1787 were moved there also the nuns from Topoliţa Monastery and placed under the leadership of Nun-Abbot Nazaria from Durau. On the same occasion Rasophore Olimpiada was tonsured as schema-nun.

Seeing that the community of the nuns had been increasing so that the church became overcrowded, Schemamonk Olimpiada gathered some funds from loving-of-Christ people, and there started to be built a much bigger church. In the year 1808 the new church was finished and placed under the patronage of the Dormition of the Mother of the Lord. Also, due to the zeal of Mother Olimpiada was built a wooden church in the cemetery, in the year 1817, in the honor of Saint John the Baptist, as also there was built the enclosure wall and monastic cells for nuns.

Despite Schemamonk Olimpiada was "Martha" of that monastery, she didn't forget about the spiritual aspects. She didn't miss any religious services; she was the first one assuming tasks, and she thoroughly observed the rule and the canon for prayers. She was occupying herself, especially at night, with reading the Holy Scriptures and with copying the words of the Holy Fathers, for herself and for her disciples.

The soul of Nun Olimpiada was adorned also with the humble cogitation. She was asked, for several times, to be the abbot there, but she didn't accept that, because of reckoning herself unworthy of it. Still, in the year 1822, she accepted to become abbot and spiritual mother of the community that numbered more than 300 nuns, and she advised with much wisdom the holy monastery for six years. Then, after Pious Iosif moved from this life, Mother Olimpiada too withdrew from being abbot. In the year 1834 she was elected,

f0or the second time, as abbot of Văratec Monastery, which she led until the year 1842, when she moved to the eternal resting, aged 85[284].

This was the life and these were the toils of Schema-Nun Olimpiada, the founder of Văratec Monastery.

SCHEMAMONK NICANOR
Sihăstria Monastery – Neamţ County
(† 1844)

This schemamonk originated from Botoşani, and he was a relative of Abbot Hilary from Neamţ Monastery. For the whole his life he was building churches in villages and cities, for in Moldavia "craftsman Nicolae Cerneschi was a famous master of stonemasons".

Between the year 1821-1822 he built at Neamţ Monastery a block of monastic cells, on the southern part of the enclosure, Between the years 1826-1840 he rebuilt again, "on his expense", the church of Sihăstria Monastery. Between the years 1826-1840 he built Saint John the Theologian Church from the cemetery of Neamţ Monastery, and the chapel for Holy Water. He also built a block of monastic cells and the Saint John the Theologian church at Secu Monastery, a block of monastic cells at Agapia Monastery, and many others. A sit turns out from inscriptions, most of the churches were built for free, "by the zeal and with the help of the loving-of Christ, sir Nicolae Cerneschi".

Between the years 1841-1842 this forever remembered founder of churches bestowed himself totally to Christ, withdrawing himself to Sihăstria Hermitage. There he was tonsured in monasticism by Abbot Valerian, who gave him the name Nicanor. In the summer of the year 1844 he finished his trip in this world and he was buried near to the church built by himself.

Old fathers say that in the year 1941, when the roof of the church burnt, the cross from the tower fell and stuck right into the founder's grave. They dug a shallow pit and they found his bones spreading a good fragrance.

God blesses so the ones who love the adornment of His house.

PIOUS JUSTIN THE HIEROSCHEMAMONK
The First Founder of Prodromul Hermitage – Mount Athos
(1770-1845)

Pious Justin the Hermit originated form Moldavia. He became a monk at Neamţ Monastery, being tonsured in monasticism by Abot Paisius. Around the year 1800 he reached to be confessor and the guided many souls on the path to salvation.

[284] Nun Zenaida Racleș and Archimandrite Evghenie Ungureanuy, *The History of Văratec Monastery*, Neamț Monastery, 1923; *Historical Monuments from Moldavia Metropolitanate*, Iași, 1975, pp. 342-353.

Wanting to spend the rest of his life in the "Garden of the Mother of the Lord", he left for Mount Athos in the year 1810, accompanied by his disciples Patapios and Gregory. There he bought from the Great Lavra Monastery the area called "Ianicopoli Vigla", that had also a small wooden church placed under the patronage of "The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist". Next to the church confessor Justin built 50 monastic cells for the fathers, a xenodochium, a kitchen, a refectory, an infirmary, and an office for the abbot. Hearing about that, the Romanian monks who were living in ascesis in other monasteries and in caves, they gathered there around thirty in number, in the community of Pious Justin. After a few years, the Great Lavra recognized to that community the right of calling themselves as "The Romanian Podromul Hermitage".

So was founded the first Romanian hermitage on Mount Athos. But the monk there were in big shortage of water, for themselves and for their garden. They asked the Great Lavra for permission for channeling the Isaiah's Creek for the hermitages needs, but they were refused. But God, by seeing the patience of the humble Romanian monks, He sent a cloud of locusts upon the crops of the Great Lavra. The monks from vainly there prayed and sprayed the crops with holy water. The locusts were destroying everything. Then, one of them said:

- Fathers, what we are seeing is the anger of God punishing us for not giving water to Father Justin the Confessor, who is also our confessor, for ne greatly needs water for his hermitage.

Hearing about that, the abbot of the Lavra called Father Justin to pray and, after making holy water, with his prayer, all locusts ran away. The fathers from Lavra saw that wonder and they said:

- Truly so, Father Iustin the Vlach is pious and holy!

Since that day, the fathers have been granted the permission to bring water from Kir Isaiah's Spring, to the hermitage.

After the year 1820, Pious Justin the Abbot, after seeing his hermitage well settled, he withdrew himself in a cave, to quietude, and he left abbot Hieromonk Patapios in his place. There is loneliness, Pious Justin lived for twenty years, in harsh ascesis, in fasting, in vigil, and in ceaseless prayer, like the pious fathers from yore. For the holiness of his life many Greek and Romanian monks honored him and had him as spiritual father.

Pious Justin lived so in ascesis, until the year 1845. Then, after kissing his disciples good bye, he passed away, peacefully, ages 75[285].

[285] Fr. V. Nicolau, *A Trip to Constantinople and to the Holy Mountain*, Ploiești, 1907; Hierarch Beniamin Pocitan, *The Holy Mountain Athos, on the Occasion of a trip top East*, Bucharest, 1949.

THE HOLY HERMIT
From the Small Cave of Ialomicioara
(Century XIX)[286]

At the beginning of the Century XIX there was living in the Cave of Ialomicioara Hermitage a humble and very-loving-of God monk. After a few years, he wanted to pray into wilderness, so that he left the hermitage and found a dwelling place in an unnoticed cave, in the thick of the ancestral forests, a cave that has been called until today "The Small Cave". The hermit didn't know that there was the den of a bear. But, by the grace of God, they made friends with one another, so that during night they dwelled together in the same cave, while during the day the bear was foraging through the forest and the hermit was praying to God.

There the hermit lived in ascesis for many years, in fasting, in prayer, and in other unknown toils. The local tradition tells us that the hermit didn't receive any food from anybody, but he foraged it by himself from the forest. Only the bear, as a faithful disciple, was bringing back to the cave, during summer, branches of raspberry and of blackberry.

There is also an old story telling us that, once, two hunters stalked the bear in a thicket. Then they followed the bear until the bear hid itself in the cave. After they had reached the cave, the hermit came out and asked them:

- My brothers, what are you searching for, in this wilderness?

- Forgive us, father, we are hunters. We have been following a bear. It has seemed that it had hidden itself here in this cave.

- But has it done any harm to you? Leave this bear alone! You will find other animals in the forest!

- Forgive us, father, and pray for us!

- May God bless you, brothers, go in peace.

- Father, we have some food that we would like to leave it to your holiness. Do you want to accept it?

- Leave it there, on that rock.

Finally, they asked the hermit:

- Father, we intend to came back to these places. Do you want us to bring you more food?

- As you wish, brothers.

After a few weeks the hunters climbed against the Ialomicioara Valley to bring some food to the hermit. When they reached the cave, they saw a fearsome thing. The hermit and the bear weren't there and, on the rock where they placed the food on the first time, that food was there untouched.

Since that day nobody knew where the hermit was, where he died, or what his name was. The only blessing remained from him is a small water spring flowing from the deep of that cave, towards the blessing of the passersby. Until these days the believers enter the "Small Cave", they pray

[286] His name was lost together with the loss of the hermitage's archive.

there, and they take a little water from "The Spring of the Hermit". And the water spring there keeps flowing.

Wonderful is Hod into His saints, God of our fathers!

BISHOP CAESARIUS OF BUZĂU
(1784-1846)

Bishop Caesarius is counted among the great Romanian hierarchs of the Century XIX. He was born in Bucharest, to poor parents, around the year 1784, and his name was Constatine Căpăţînă. At the age of 13 (1797) he was entrusted to Bishop Iosif of Argeş, who sent him to school to learn Greek at Domniţa Bălaşa Church. Then he became a monk at Antim Monastery, under the name Caesarius, and he was ordained a deacon there.

In the year 1820, the disciple of Bishop Iosif reached to be steward of the Antim Monastery and later on he was appointed steward of the Metropolitanate from Bucharest. Being gifted by God with much obedience, humbleness, and skillfulness, in the year 1825 he was ordained as Bisop of Buzău by Metropolitan Gregory the Teacher, so that he shepherded the flock of Christ with undiminished love and zeal, for 21 years.

Finding the Buzău Eparchy with many needs and with derelict churches, he renewed tens of places – monasteries, hermitages, subordinated units, and churches -, so that he thus became a great founder of that eparchy. And for the enlightenment of the children and for the general benefit of the nation, he founded numerous schools as: the Eparchial Seminary, founded in the year 1836; the School for Churchly Music, in the year 1830; the School for Churchly Painting, under the leadership of painter Nicolae Teodorescu, in the year 1831; the School for Churchly Sculpture, in the year 1833, and others. In those schools founded by Bishop Caesarius were brought the best professors, confessors, and teachers from The Romanian Country, and the alumni of those schools recorded later on bishops, priests, and chosen teachers, as also renown painters. The students were demanded, in the first place, a strong faith in God, prayer, and consummate moral living.

For printing the books needed for religious services and for spiritual teaching, Bishop Caesarius founded, in the year 1833, an eparchial printing press, where were printed, with his blessing and on his expenses, tens of patristic and cultic books, most of them handed over for free.

Among the books printed under his shepherding, we are mentioning here: *About the Proceeding of the Holy Ghost, Sharing of Wheat*, and *The Fountain of Saint John Chrysostom* (1833); *Brief Advising to Him Who Repents* (1834); *Homilies* (1834); *Interpretation to the One Hundred and Fifty Psalms* (1840): *Teaching to Priests and Deacons* (1835); *Golden Composition* (1837); *Book Useful to the Soul*; *Five Words of Saint Gregory of Nyssa* (1838); *Chiriacodromion* (1839), and others. And among the books for religious

services, he printed: *The Gospel* (1834); *Rich Euchologion*, *The Holy Liturgies*, and *The Book of Psalms* (1835); *The Rich Book of Hours*, *The Book of Akathists* (1836); *Octoechos* and *The Book of Katabases* (1839); *The Holy Liturgies* (1840); *The Book of Psalms* (1841); *The Book for Blessings for Holy Water* (1845), and others.

This tireless bishop and faithful shepherd of the Church of Christ took permanent care of his spiritual sons, building dwelling and praying places for them, giving them good priests, personally visiting them, and feeding them with teaching book and with parental words. And as disciple of a great bishop – Iosif of Argeş -, he too raised many disciples and souly sons, among whom the most renowned was Hierodeacon Iosif Nanescu, the venerable Metropolitan of Moldavia from later on.

In the year 1846, on 30th of November, Bishop Caesarius, the good and faithful shepherd of the Buzău Eparchy, passed away peacefully, and he was mourned by all his believers and he was buried next to the church, towards eternal remembrance. His tombstone bears this beautiful inscription: "Stop, you passerby, your step, in respect, next to the peaceful dwelling place of this sacred tomb. Here Hierarch Casearius rests his body from the many, and done in a short time, sacrifices towards the glory of the Lord, of the Motherland, and of his eternal memory. (November 30, 1846)"[287].

METROPOLITAN VENIAMIN COSTACHI
Of Moldavia and of Suceava
(1758-1846)[288]

a. His Life

The great Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi was one of the most venerable hierarchs of The Romanian Orthodox Church. He shepherded the eparchies from Moldavia with a rare self-bestowing, for a half of a century (1792-1842). He was a great scholar, a full of courage hierarch, a tireless books translator, a founder of schools and churches, a spiritual father of Moldavia, a chosen servant of the Church of Christ, a teacher, a counselor, and a devoted monk.

Metropolitan Veniamin was born on 20th of December 1768, in the Roşieşti-Fălciu Village, to faithful and of noble lineage parents – Grigorie Ursachi and Maria Cantacuzino. Four of the five brothers embraced the monastic life. The first one, Matei, he was a chief adviser of the voivode's advisers. The second brother, Constantine, he became a monk under the name

[287] ***, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1858, pp. 419-422; D. Furtună, *Caesarius Bishop of Buzău*, Bucharest, 1913ș G. Voiculescu, *The Life and the Activity of Caesarius*, license thesis, 1897, p. 57.

[288] ***, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1858, pp. 383-387; Fr. Prof. M. Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, Sibiu, 1972, pp. 280-288; Fr. Prof. Ilie Gheorghiță, *A Century since the Death of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi*, Neamț Monastery, 1941; *The Prefaces* of the books translated and printed under the shepherding of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi (1807-1846).

of Caesarius. The third child, Basil, reached to be a famous metropolitan of Moldavia. The fourth child, Schema-Nun Elisabeta, was abbot of the Agapia Monastery for 32 years. The last brother, Şerban, was counselor of Metropolitan Beniamin, becoming am monk under the name Sophrony.

From a young age, child Basil was sent to study at Three Hierarchs Monastery from Iaşi. At the age of 15 hew was taken by Bishop Iacob Stamati as disciple to the Huşi Bishopric. After a year, in the year 1784, he was tonsured in monasticism under the name of Veniamin. In the year 1788 he was ordained deacon and taken to serve to the metropolitan cathedral from Iaşi. Safter one more year he was ordained priest and appointed chief ecclesiarch. He was only 20 years old. In the same year, 1789, he was appointed abbot to Sant Spiridon Monastery form Iaşi.

In the year 1793 Archimandrite Veniamin was elected and ordained bishop of Huşi, by his spiritual father Metropolitan Iacob Stamati. Although he was only 24 years old when ascending on the step of the hierarchy, he proved himself to be, since the beginning, a good scholar and a true shepherd of the flock of Christ, so that in November 1794 he was send as envoy of the Metropolitan to attend the burial of Pious Paisius from Neamţ Monastery.

On 1st of June 1796, after four years of shepherding at Huşi, the young hierarch Veniamin was appointed as Bishop of Iaşi, where he was shepherding for seven more years. There he founded a hospital, a pharmacy, and he paid with the bishopric founds a medic for the ill people. In the same time, he made a thorough order among the churchly clergy.

On 10th of March, Metropolitan Iacob Stamati, his venerable spiritual father, moved to the eternal life. A few days later, Bishop Veniamin Costachi was elected Metropolitan of Moldavia. Many and heavy were the troubles which came upon the great metropolitan, but much more numerous and worthy of remembrance were his achievements, on spiritual and on ecclesiastic, and on social and patriotic realms.

In the autumn of the year 1803 he founded the seminary from Socola Monastery, that was the first seminary for priest in our country. At that time, he also sent two sons of priest, Petru and Gheorghe Asachi, to study abroad; he organized numerous monasteries and hermitages in his eparchy; he supported the rebuilt of tens of churches in cities and in villages; he set in place new rules for the great Monasteries of Neamţ, Secu, Agapia, and Văratec; he ordained in his eparchy only priests who graduated the seminary and he established to be the baptism of the children done by sinking them in the water, and not by pouring water upon them as it was done at that time in some areas.

In the year 1833 he started the building of the monumental Metropolitan Cathedral from Iaşi. He also contributed directly to the foundation of the Mihăilean Academy from the capital city of Moldavia, and he also contributed to the foundation of several public schools with teaching in Romanian

language. He undertook numerous canonical visits to churches, monasteries, schools, and especially to the seminary.

But the worthiest to remember activity of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi was that of translator and publisher of numerous patristic and of ritual books. In this regard he remains unparalleled in the history of the Moldavian Church. The two printing presses founded by him at Neamţ Monastery and at Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery from Iaşi, they barely kept the pace in printing the one hundred and fifty original books and translations form Greek and Slavonic. In addition to his care for the entire eparchy of Moldavia and of Suceava, Metropolitan Veniamin wrote seven original works and he personally translated 32 books of great dogmatic, moral, liturgical, hagiographical, and historical importance.

Between the years 1808-1812, Metropolitan Veniamin withdrew from his chair to Neamţ Monastery, where he translated and printed *The Lives of the Saints*. Then he turned himself back again to his believers. In the year 1821, because of the Etheria uprising, he lived for a while at Colincăuţi, on the other bank of River Prut. And in January 1842, after 50 years of fr5uitful hierarchal serving, he withdrew himself, definitively, to Slatina Monastery, where he continued his life of prayer and his vast activity as translator, for the spiritual nourishment of our rightly-believer people.

At 18th of December 1846, Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi passed away form this life aged 78 and he was buried as a simple monk at Slatina Monastery. After forty more years, on 30th of December 1886, the remnants of the great hierarch were moved to Iaşi and they were placed in the cathedral founded by him and finished by Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. The first care of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, after he was elected Bishop of Roman (1796), it was that of reinforcing the discipline in parishes and to elevate the moral life of the priests form his eparchy. On that purpose, he issued a Pastoral Letter towards the priests, composed of eight points, through which he demanded from them full love for Christ, zeal for the churchly aspects, and much care for the salvation of the believers.

2. After being elected Bishop of Iaşi (1803), the first care of the great Hierarch was that for founding a seminary in order to shape an enlightened clergy in Moldavia. Thus, in the same year with his election, he founded the first seminary from the country, in the monastic cells of Socola Monastery situated in the outskirts of the city, a seminary which provided entire generations of literate priests, teachers, and chosen hierarchs.

3. The love of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi for enlightening of the people, it urged him to found other schools too in the cities of Moldavia, as also printing presses for printing books in Romanian. The most important schools founded at his advice and with his help were:

- the Seminary from Socola Monastery, in the year 1803;

- the School for Churchly Songs, in Iaşi, in the year 1805;
- the School for Nuns at Agapia Monastery, in the year 1805;
- the Primary School, the Normal School, and the Gymnasium at Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery from Iaşi, in the year 1828;
- the Mihăilean Academy from Iasi, in the year 1834;
- the Public School for the daughters of the Townspeople, in the year 1834;
- Public Schools in all the cities of Moldavia;
- the first School for Arts and Crafts from Moldavia, in the year 1841.

4. In his long shepherding Metropolitahn Veniamin founded anew and consecrated tens of churches form monasteries and from parishes from villages and from cities. Among the churches founded by him we are mentioning here: the church of Văratec Monastery, the church of Sihăstria Monastery, the church of Vorona Monastery, the Horaiţa Monastery, the Durau Hermitage, the Rarău Hermitage and several others, but his greatest foundation, in addition to the mentioned ones, it was the Metropolitan Cathedral from Iaşi, founded in the year 1833, but finished by one of his successors.

5. For reinforcing the discipline in monasteries, Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi issued new monastic rules, he appointed abbots from among the most spiritual monks, he brought good teachers to the founded schools, and he extended the two printing presses from Iaşi and from Neamţ Monastery. Those two printing presses printed, for the benefit and fore the enlightenment of the people, until the passing away of the Metropolitan, more than one hundred and fifty titles of churchly books and of books for spiritual teaching. The prefaces of those books are true building of soul epistles.

6. Thus, Metropolitan Veniamin was teaching about the importance of the *Lives of the Saints* for the salvation of the soul:

- One wouldn't be wrong, neither one would be far from truth, if one called the books comprising the *Lives of the Saints*, on the twelve months of the year, as a Paradise adorned with all kinds of trees, with beautiful and sweet and life-maker fruits, a garden with good fragrance herbs and healer of any illness and helplessness.

7. He also said:

- As the tress and the good-fragrance herbs sweeten the senses, gladden the eyes, delight the taste, make glad the watcher's soul, likewise the books of *The Lives of the Saints* encourage the despaired one, comfort the troubled, turn the sinner to repentance, soften the callous in heart and bestow him humility; they turn back the strayed, they bow down the proud; they sweeten the senses which are full of the bitterness of the sin, and they make the man anew, alive from dead, and they wake the man up from the sleep of the insensitiveness and of the laziness, and they start the man towards the working of the good deeds, and they light the man up towards following to the saints and they advise the man towards that path leading to the Kingdom of Heavens.

8. The great hierarch also said:

- The Lives and the Praises of the Saints liken to the shine of the stars. For, as the stars are placed and strengthened on the sky and they illuminate all the things from under the sky – they brighten the earth, the illuminate the sea, they direct those who sail in their ships – whose name we do not know because of their multitude, but we wonder about their brightness. It is likewise the brightness of the lives of the saints. They brighten the soul, they enlighten the mind, and they settle down the body with a good and peaceful composition.

9. Metropolitan Veniamin also said:

- As "a star differs from another star in the glory", likewise, the lives of the saints surpass one another with the glory, with the beauty, with the state, and with the discernment.

10. And against those who do not read the holy books, according to the word of the Blessed Simeon Metaphrastes, he said:

- Uttering the evil and speaking the indecent things is equal to be silent regarding the honored and useful things. This is because, as the minds of the listeners are wounded by the wrong and dishonorable things, likewise does him who deprives the Christians of the useful knowledge regarding the lives of the saints.

11. Then he added these words too:

- Do not be cheap with the things which are useful to the soul, for the clothing, for the adornment, and for the nourishment of the soul. This is for, as this corruptible body is fed with the corruptible foods, likewise, the soul is nourished with the word of God, with the holy stories, and with the lives of the saints.

12. Like the body, by not eating the food appropriate to it, after a while cannot live any longer, but it will die, likewise the soul that is not nourished with the reading of the godlike Scriptures, with the lives of the saints, and with the word of God, it won't be able to stay alive, by any means, but it will die.

13. On other occasion, he also taught the people, by telling them:

- Oh. man, when you do not crave for, neither you endear reading the words teaching you to do good deeds, your soul won't be humble, won't humiliate himself, and won't repent for your sins. When you do not renounce doing evil deeds, when you don't visit the ill people, when you don't give alms to the poor what you afford, when you don't' love your neighbor as yourself, but you envy his thriving, and instead of mercy you steal from the poor, then your soul is totally dead to the good deeds, which, by reading the godlike Scriptures work and grow and sum up.

14. And he urged those who were lazy to reading the holy books:

- That's why we pray and urge you, embrace the Lives of the saints and read them; not once not twice, but for many times. Do not say that you have read them once or twice and that's enough to you, "for the salvation of the soul is into much advising", says the Ecclesiastes.

15. Then he said:

- If you read the Lives of the Saints with right-faith, with piousness, and by paying attention to them, you soul will wake up towards following the good

things, your mind will be enlightened, and your eyes will become two rivers or two springs of tears. Then you will know the mercifulness of God, the kindness, and the doing good to the neighbor. Then you will know how much love showed the saints to God, our Creator, so that some of them gave even their bodies to be tormented for their love for Him, and other with fasting and with the whole suffering melted their bodies down.

16. Metropolitan Veniamin added also these words:

- The money you spent playing cards, partying, and going other useless and soul-destroying things - for which, oh, how difficult will be to you to answer on the day of the judgment! – give that money to by books and you will have reward from God and praise for not wasting your money. And the time you spend for playing cards and for other vanities, spend it for the good deed of reading the books of the Holy Fathers, and so you will escape the multitude of the vain-word you utter, and because of which you will take much punishment when you will have in front of you the fearsome Judge Who said that "for every vain word the people will be held accountable on the day of the judgment".

17. This is why – Metropolitan Veniamin continued – we pray you and we urge you that, by parting with some useless and destroying-of-soul things like those, by reading the Lives of the Saints you to get to the working of the good deeds, and you to stretch yourself towards the zeal and towards following the saints, so that together with the saints you too to dwell in the Kingdom of Heavens.

18. He also told to his spiritual sons:

- One needs to read the godlike Scriptures instilled by God, oh, you beloved reader, more than any other due things helping top enlightenment, and which bring to the man the salvation and the ascending towards the high things.

19. He also said these:

- The Lord's words are clean words, silver cleaned in fire, golden clothes, which, interwoven out of the wool of the Lamb Who removed the sins of the world; thought skins of the witness's tent accompanying our nature killed through the transgression of the godlike commandments, which build us up, which dress us up, and which adorn us like on a holy tent and like a sanctified church, towards the dwelling within us of the infinite God.

20. And about the difficulty of the hierarchal responsibility the humble shepherd of the flock of Christ said these words:

- So, I have found out that the current times are hasty, the things are opposing, the man's life is short, the sins are many, the death draws closer, the rope of the daily life keeps becoming shorter to the stick, the torments of the hell are many and awful and endless, the Gehenna's fire is burning and awful, the tartar is so cold that even the devil shivers in it, the workers are merciless, and the Judge is totally right.

Next to these, remembering that I am neither strong as Jacob for removing the stone from on the water-well's shaft, in order I to water my speaking flocks; neither my staff has become a snake, as to Moses; neither

have I transformed the water in blood, in order to be convincing that I have been sent to get Israel out of sin and to advise them towards the Kingdom of Heavens; but, so stupid as I am, woe to me, with which soul and with which heart, I the mindless ones, have dares to take upon myself this job, which I have accepted?

21. On some other occasion, Metropolitan Veniamin confessed also that:

- Woe to me, how have I dares, I the daring, so that I burdened myself with such a difficult task? But I am asking, have I also taken some unveiling in order to accept upon myself such a big job? Have I heard too, as Moses did: "Come, and I will send you"? (Exod. 3: 10). Have I firstly assessed my unworthiness? Have I said that I am numbed to my voice and I am stuttering, because of my stupidity and illiteracy? Havre I said: "I am unworthy, Lord", as Moses did? Have I prayed, like Moses did: "I pray You, Lord, appoint somebody else who is worthy of being sent"? (Exod. 4: 13). Ah, I have mistaken very much, I the wicked, and I have been deceived and I have followed human advice, and I haven't opened the eye of my mind in order I to see and I to assess my helplessness!

22. At the end he added these too:

- The hierarchy of the New Law is above the commandment of the Old Law. This is because there was the Exodus from Egypt, while here is the running away from sin; there was the deliverance from under the tyranny of Pharaoh, while here is the deliverance of the souls from under the oppression of the devil.

23. The Great Metropolitan cherished so much the words of Saint John Climacus that he recommended those words to everybody, saying:

- As the bread is, more than any other food, more necessary to the body, so it is this book of Saint John of Sinai to one who desires his salvation, more necessary than all the other books of the Holy Fathers. And, as the moon overwhelms the stars, likewise this book overwhelms all the other books. And as the sight is more working than any other senses of the man, likewise is this book more working to man's salvation. This is for this book tells you all the all-holy wills of God, unlike other more wonderful and enlightened books.

24. *The Ladder* of Saint John, the good shepherd continued saying, it is not only to the monks but also to the laypeople, an all-good guide and canon, which advised everybody, in details, about the pious things. Through its wise teachings, this book brings them who honor it, towards humbleness and towards the crying that cleans up all the bodily and souly defilements. It is not possible to the human tongue to tell, according to their worthiness, the wonderful gifts of this book, which this book rewards its readers with.

25. Then he added also these words:

- Rceieve this book with love, of, my beloved readers, and read it often and attentively for, unmistakingly, this book is some staff of Moses, which you will be able to part the sea of this life with, that is much fogy and stirring up the passions, and you will sail it without danger; and the thought Pharaoh,

namely the devil, you will see him drowned in it, as Israel from yore did to the Egyptians.

26. He also said:

- This book is manna sweetening the senses of that soul that is troubled with the passions and with the waves of this world. This book is a realm delivering those who escape to read it, it releases them from sinking into the many surrounding sins, and it makes them swim without danger through the waters of this much-mirky life.

27. He also said:

- *The Ladder* of Saint John of Sinai is that ladder seen by Jacob yore, which end reaches to the sky – into which God is fortified – and which the angels descend on, like some servant ghosts, for them who want to inherit the salvation, and the saved souls climb on it and God received them into His Kingdom and He places them there.

28. At the end, Metropolitan Veniamin added:

- He who is thirsty of his salvation, let him run to this all-sweet river, and he will truly be sweetened and he will be all-gladdened. This is for the flowing of this river truly gladden the city of God, namely the believers' souls, and it calls them: "Come, get closer, all of you who want to satiate yourselves with my causing-of-eternal-life fruits".

29. And about the rules of the churchly religious services, Metropolitan Veniamin thought these:

- We have been always striving to translate them well, according to the nature of our language, in order they to me more easily understood by the reader, being ware of the fact that some of the readers form the countryside are weaker to reading and heavier to understanding. So that not to remain, because of this misunderstanding, some of the pious words of the religious service unread or unsung, and so the officiators to mistake before God, or before the All-Holy Birth Giver of God, or before the saint whom they sing the religious service to, and instead of blessing and instead of forgiveness of the sins, for tiredness, they to attract upon themselves wrath and curse because of their nescience and because of their mistake.

30. The good shepherd also said:

- As zealously, and with love, and piously one sings to God, or to the Birth Giver of God, or to the saint, with understanding and with right-faith, as much will be content God and the All-Holy Birth Giver and the saints, who pray and bring the mercy of God upon him in order God to bestow him the forgiveness of his sins.

31. Then he added also these:

- What is pleasant to God, it is also pleasant to the All-Holy Birth Giver of God and to His saints. And what is pleasant to the saints and to the All-Holy Birth Giver of God, it is pleasant to God too.

32. And he said about using the typicon:

- The typicon sets in good order even your walk, how you must walk in the church of God with piousness and with awe; how you to behave into the

holy things, how you to read attentively and zealously the word of the Holy Fathers, to the listeners' ears, in order you both to benefit of it and to guide the listeners on the path of salvation.

33. The typicon, said Metropolitan Veniamin, will teach you how much zeal you must have when officiating the holy religious services of God, of the All-Holy Birth Giver of God, and of His saints, zeal that any Christian must have. All the more the priests and the deacons owe to be role-models and examples of good deeds to their parishioners.

34. If you have such a zeal, the Metropolitan added, to read the typicon and to know its teachings, if you will accustom yourselves to its teachings, and if you will officiate in good order the religious services to the saints, if you are zealous towards the godlike things and if you love the good rules of the religious services of the saints, of the churchly ceremonies, and of the well-pleasant, life, you will become inheritors of the Kingdom of Heavens. This is too the purpose of the translation of the typicon.

35. About the benefit of reading the Holy Scriptures, the great Metropolitan taught these:

- What is sweeter or more gladdening in life, than the man to get closer with his mind, to God, and to talk to Him, through a chosen and undisturbed cogitation while reading the godlike words. This being known by Prophet and Emperor David, he said: "How sweet are Your words to my tongue, sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb" (Ps. 18: 11; Ps. 118: 103[289]).

36. On some other occasions, he parentally urged everyone, telling them:

- Occupy yourselves, day and night, with reading the Holy Scriptures and you will really be like the tree next to the springs of the waters, bringing forth the fruit of the life, at the right time, and your leaves of your good things will be everlasting (Ps. 1: 3).

37. And on the importance of the *Book of Hours*, he said:

- One wouldn't be wrong, nor would one be far from truth, if one called this book as golden candlestick with seven torches, according to the vision of Prophet Zachariah, for this book symbolizes the seven Praises of our Holy Orthodox Church. Neither if one called it sky. This is for, as the sky comprises in itself the stars and the seven planets, likewise the *Book of Hours* comprises in itself the seven Praises and the multitude of the saints comprised in twelve months.

38. The wise father of Moldavia said also:

- Comprise these praises with a glad soul, you loving-of Christ Christians, without laziness, bringing them to God on each day, thinking at the Sufferings of the Lord comprised in them, wanting in good hope the day of the coming of Christ to judgment. This is for He will come having His payment with Himself, in order Him ton reward each one according to his deeds. And believe, without any doubt, that you will take the reward for your toils.

39. About the benefit of the learning, he also said:

[289] In KJB ww have: Ps. 19: 10; Ps. 119: 103. (E. l. t.'s n.)

- As the learning elevates and extolls the man, as much the lack of learning lowers and destroys the man more than the speechless beasts.

40. Metropolitan Veniamin also said these:

- The man, being endowed by God with the talent of speaking being, and with mind for receiving science, but not occupying himself with learning any kind of science or of craftsmanship, he won't be reckoned worthy of being called as man, but only as a cunning and lazzi servant. Neither will be such a man worthy of other reward but only of "being thrown into the outer darkness, where is eternal crying and the gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 25: 30).

41. And to the parents who didn't send their children to school, he told them:

- Killers of sons, really, can be reckoned those parents who do not take care of providing their sons with any teaching. And even worse than those, as Saint John Chrysostom underscores it, by saying: "This is because the killers of sons separate only the body form the soul, but they who do not provide their sons with good education and with learning, they separate the body from the soul and also the soul from God". Woe, therefore, to you, parents, in this world, but also woe to you even more bitterly in the world to come!

42. Each science and craftsmanship are gained by theory and by praxis (practice). This is identical to the Christian learning too. In order somebody to be a consummate Christian, he smut have, in the first place, the theory of the faith, namely he must know the godlike Scripture and teaching. Then he must have praxis, namely he must have the deeds of the faith, because *the faith without deeds is dead* (Jas. 2: 20).

43. The added also these words:

- The Church, in the past centuries, took such a good care for the teaching of the faith that, from the level of the hierarchs, all the clergy, even the anagnostics, they had the task of catechizing the people. They even had women-deacons appointed to catechized the women. In the beginning, even the religious service of the Holy Liturgy was officiated after preaching, for a long time, the teaching of the faith.

44. Nowadays, Metropolitan Veniamin continued, because of diminution of the teaching of the faith it was very facile for the faith to be diminished as well. So, because of the faith getting diminished, its signs necessarily have become fewer, so that the witnesses of the Holy Scriptures about the signs and the miracles done yore, they seem today like some fairytales to those who walk into the darkness of the nescience and of the non-knowing of the godlike Scriptures. And the few and very rare miracles happening even today, are reckoned by those as pure happenings.

45. Then, the venerable Metropolitan, asked with bitterness:

- Who is occupying himself today with reading the Holy Scriptures in order him to know what God is, what the world is, and what the man is? Which parent strives to found in the heart of his sons the knowledge about God, the teaching of the dogmas of the faith, and the commandments of the law?

Truly, very few are those who do that and, really, almost all the young people of this century, lacking the whole knowledge of the Christian teachings, they deviated to worthless occupations, to fantasies, and to all sorts of vanities, out of which springs all the transgressions of the law and the disregarding of the commandments. Such occupations like these have been able to all-easily topple over, in many parts of Europe, the tower of the faith, whose foundation hasn't been placed on the foundation of the Orthodox dogmas.

46. To the Orthodox too, the Metropolitan added, they cause no little straying. This is because, by each one getting pride of being a philosopher and a scholar, they don't allow to be themselves guided by the bridle of the faith, because of that stopping them to indulge to the wills of their heart. But they hallucinate on their own, to themselves, righteousness and laws.

47. The good shepherd said also:

- I the worthless one, by reckoning that taking upon myself the task of archi-shepherding this country, if I don't strive to get my speaking "flock" far from such straying, the righteous Judge will rebuke me more fearsomely than for my sins. I have been striving, also by urging, but also through my own efforts and expenses, for I have translated and printed books with all kinds of teachings, advising to the true knowledge and giver of much souly benefit.

48. And about the benefit of the books, the great hierarch said:

- The hope I've been nourishing and I am nourishing it still, it is that, by being the books and the sciences multiplied in my motherland's language, if not I, at least my descendants will be worthy of benefiting of taught clergy and approved for gaining an enlightened people to the Christian teachings. This hope had been keeping me sleepless and tireless in translating the holy books, among which many have remained unprinted because of the lack of means.

49. Then he urged the readers, telling them:

- Be you, my beloved ones, paying attention to the reading of this book[290], so that by reading it entirely, to memorize as much as you can of it. I am placing this very useful book, today, in front of you, , my beloved patriots, and I pray you to receive it as an accomplishment of one of my many duties towards my speaking flock.

50. And about the manner one must read the holy books, he taught like this:

- The mind is exactly as the stomach is. And as the much-eating brings indigestion, and after a while the stomach will not be able to digest anything, likewise is the mind too. When somebody loads his mind up with much-reading, immediately that he closes his book he will forget everything he has read. And after a while, his mind will become totally unworking and it will forget even the things he knew before.

Therefore, he who wants to benefit of reading, he must follow this diet. Namely, after he has read in quietude, by paying good attention to what he has been reading, let him close the book and ask himself what he has read. And

[290] *The History of the Scripture of the Old Testament*.

after repeating all those things in his mind, let him continue reading, as much as he reckons his mind can digest. In this way he will truly benefit, for by laying everything in good order in his mind, at any moment he will be able to share his knowledge to others. Then the mind becomes working as well, by preserving in good condition everything it has read and heard.

51. Metropolitan Veniamin told to his shepherds:

- My sons, pray for me too, for I am always honoring the general benefit more than the breathing that keeps me alive. This is for I have all my bodily and spiritual powers strained, in harmony, like some strings which, anytime the fingers of the community move them, the strings are ready to sound the voice that is pleasant to everybody's love.

52. On some other occasion he urged them:

- Receive my zeal with love, my beloved ones, together with the reading of this little book, which despite seeming small, if you pay attention to its high meanings, you will together-follow also to the repentance of the humble one, who with the whole his heart repents and bitterly cries and he feels sorry for his sins in front of God.

53. He also said:

- Knock, incessantly, on the door of the mercy of God, until He will have mercy on you and Christ with His sufferings will embody within your hearts. Do not waste your time vainly, a time given to you by God for you to repent yourselves, for He is waiting for your change. This is in order, after a too-long patience of His, not to arrive His judgment too, and then there will be nobody to save you.

54. He also added this:

- Reject all cunningness, all envy, and all evilness from within your hearts, and all uncleanness, strife, and blasphemy form your souls, and God will receive you into repentance. Be gentle, be pious, have awe towards the holy things, love God, love your brothers, and you will live happy days in this life, and at the end of your life you will go there, having good hopes for salvation. My beloved ones, be zealous towards any good deed during this short life, and pray for me, for I am of your love praying for both blessings.

55. He said also these:

- Do not limit yourselves only to read the Holy Scriptures, but especially urge on one another towards every useful thing. In addition to that, guide your sons and all youngsters towards all healthy teachings, pleasant to God and useful, according to the duty you have, because you will be held accountable for these youngsters in front of God.

56. Then he added, saying:

- Stay into every good deed and be waiting with good hope for the day of coming of Christ to judgment. This is for He will come, having His payment with Himself, so that He will reward anyone according to these things, as Himself promises.

57. About officiating the religious services in Romanian, he said:

- Wonder about the untold wisdom of the Creator of all creatures, as He brought the whole creation out of nothing. As He did with our language as well, so pressured by many other languages, but He elevated it to such height and worthiness, so that he deigned to make us worthy of bringing Him doxologies and praying Him and thanking Him in Romanian, and worshipping the Holy Trinity in one being. To the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.

58. In the *Preface* to the *Pentecostarion*, Metropolitan Veniamin said these full of heavenly joy words:

- Oh, golden book! You, by appearing, you scatter all the souls' sadness and you will the Church of Christ with light and shininess. You, by showing yourself, you banish away the whole gloom of the faces that is born out of the sadness of those hearts burdened by tears and bitterness. You call al the believers to gladden in community. You, usually, given to everybody good hopes for salvation. You call the righteous and the sinners, both them who have restrained themselves and have fasted and those who were lazy and haven't fasted, for all of them together to rejoice an to be glad.

59. The good shepherd issued also this parental advice:

- Come and rejoice together of our Lord Who keeps us and Who feeds us and Who gives us all tee good things and Who endures all our sins and lawlessness and, as a kind and loving-of people He doesn't punish us. But He always long-suffers, waiting for our repentance so that He will forgive us, He will embrace us, and He will make us partakers not only to resurrection but also to His Kingdom.

60. He also said:

- Let's not be lazy, wasting our time vainly, a time give us by God towards repentance. But, let's be vigil on every moment for it comes that great and fearsome day of the lord, when each of us will receive his payment according to what he worked during his life.

61. The *Book of Hours*, said Metropolitan Veniamin, it is the book of the most necessary prayers, which nourish the soul with the most comforting and full of humiliation holy prayers, with which the pious souls gradually being lit up towards God shout out together with the prophet: "How sweet are to my throat Your word, Lord!".

62. In the *Preface* to *Chronographer*, the good shepherd of Moldavia also said:

- Having I the task of the archi-shepherding and of taking care of the pasture for the speaking sheep, I myself and others have been striving in all kinds of ways for being translated the word of God in Romanian, from diverse foreign languages embraced by our mother, the right-worshipping Church of the East, towards the benefit and salvation of the rightly-believing people of the Romanian nation.

63. He also said:

- We need two moral helpers in the first place, in order us to can reach towards our salvation. Namely we need knowledge and faith. And as the faith resurrects through good deeds, because otherwise is dead, also, the knowledge,

that is born out of faith, it is acquired and if it consummated through the teaching of the godlike Scriptures. Due to that, also our Savior, when sending His apostles in the world, He told to them: "Going, teach all the nations, by preaching them My *Gospel*, and then baptize them" (Mk. 16: 15).

64. In the *Preface* of *The Churchly History*, the great hierarch said:

- Only the church has been able to make sons of Israel out of wild beasts, and a chosen and well-pleasant people, zealous worker of the land, faithfully obedient to the ruler, gentle parent of the family, zealous limb of the state and, in a word, a citizen useful to the society.

65. The he continued saying:

- By reading *The Churchly History*, each one can see that the asylum of the sciences and of the literature during the barbarian persecutions was the Church. And to say so, the light of the wisdom has been preserved with holiness in the fire of the mysteries of the altar. And the guardians of the precious deposit of the culture have been the clergy, namely the natural teachers of the morals.

66. He also said:

- If each of us does everything he can for the good of the Church, of our Motherland, and of the mankind, our society won't perish.

67. On some other occasion Metropolitan Veniamin said, full of grief:

- If we run together with Jeremiah on the ways of Jerusalem, searching, we won't find that one who to make judgment and to try the faith. This is because, from the smallest to the biggest, all of them committed lawlessness; form priest to liar prophet, who want to heal the scattering of the people with liar words, by saying: Peace! – while the peace is totally absent right in his heart. What should we say about such indifferent ones to God and to people, who have forsaken the spring of the living water and they had dug instead unclean fountains, which collapse and don't last

68. The sons of this age, because of fearing the death, they desire the life, so that they embrace the world of the perdition and they swim in the ocean of their passions. "But who will give water to my head and springs of tears to my eyes – says Jeremiah the Prophet – so that I could cry for this people and his wounded ones, day and night?" (Jer. 1: 16).

69. The great Hierarch also said these:

- Only a living aiming to Christians goals, useful to the world, it can be called as life. Thus, our body which the foam of the passions stays crowded within, it cannot be but a prison to the man, a prison in whose darkness stays the man's godlike grace.

70. Metropolitan Veniamin also said:

- My beloved sons and brothers! If the true glory consists only of virtue, then in order us to be great men and kings over the world and over its eons, we won't need thrones or crowns or scepters, but we will only need to work the kindness and the justice in the Lord's vineyard. Then, united through the evangelical love, let's walk in a sole thought in the house of God, cogitating day and night at the Lord's law.

71. Then he continued, saying:

- Let's place our will in the Law of the lord, so that, in need, we could say, together with Hezekiah: "Remember us, oh, God, for we have been walking in front of You in truth and with a benevolent heart we have been doing the things pleasant to Your eyes" (Lamentations 5: 1).

Lo the means which we can life through, not for long but with immortality, whatever position and state we would be in.

72. He also said:

- There is nothing greater, my beloved ones, or stronger, of brighter, or more useful under the sun, and in the same time more easily to achieve, than the things of the virtue. By virtues and by faith, and not by weapon and worldly power, all the saints overcame the awful kingdoms of the darkness, and they founded the Kingdom of the Gospel.

73. After fifty years of sacrifice, of toils, and of fruitful hierarchal service in the Church of Christ (1792-1842), Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi withdrew himself to Slatina Monastery where he lived for four more years as simple monk, continuing to translate books useful to the soul from Old Greek to Romanian, for the enlightenment of our Romanian Orthodox people.

Touched by the Holy Ghost, "the humble spiritual father of Moldavia", before his death, he shared by his will the whole his wealth to the monastery and to the poor, addressing to all of them his last words of general forgiveness and blessing:

- I leave, I forgive, and I bless with my whole heart and with my whole soul all my Christian brothers and even those who hate me, who did injustice to me, and who set their traps before e, even those who did evil to me in a seen or unseen manner, and I pray the merciful God not to judge their deeds, but to have mercy on all of them after I have forgiven them.

74. And for his burial, the Great Hierarch Veniamin Costachi wrote in the same will:

- I appoint my son Meletius, for the love of the Lord, to bury me according to the advice I have given him, outside the holy church, without hierarchs, simply, and without vain pomposity and expenses"[291].

PASTORAL LETTER
GIVEN TO THE ROMAN EPARCHY
(Probably in the year 1796)
Veniamin, by the Mercy of God, Humble Bishop of Roman[292]

Ever since the godlike Providence wanted to entrust us with the office of the Spiritual Shepherding, our purpose was and it is the good managing of the

[291] All the spiritual words from above have been take from the *Prefaces* to the books printed by Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi.

[292] A Century from the Death of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, pp. 238-250.

Churches, the salvation of the speaking sheep, and the zeal for the pious living of the Lord's priests.

Therefore, lo, you priest, I have placed in front of you these rules on how you owe to behave yourself, which I ask you to read often, and you ought to observe what they teach you, thoroughly.

1. You owe to, you priest, as one who has received upon yourself the Gift of the All-Holy Ghost and as you have appointed to be teacher to the people, not to have your behavior as that of the common people, but you must be protected and guarded against any blemish that brings scandal and defamation to your rank, (namely of) drunkenness, that is the beginning of all evilness, of strife, of pride, of quarrels, of suits in court, of swearing, of vain words, of right and unjust oaths, and of being witness against somebody. And you must be clean to your inside and to your outside, clean at your clothes, washed, and combed, for, with all your deeds, you must be a role-model to those who look at you, because the subjects have the habit of following their adviser in all aspects.

2. You must take care of the Church where you are appointed servant, in order the Church to be tidy and adorned with the necessary things, both inside, with books, icons, holy vessels, vessel for baptism which the child to be easily sunk, for three times, and not to use pouring water on the child or other way, as also outside, the Church to be also well covered and fenced around; and when the Church lacks something, once and twice, you must urge the founders and the people to fulfill the necessary things. And in case they don't follow your advice, you will go and see the chief-priest of that county, so that he will follow the teaching he will receive from us.

3. When you are about officiating the godlike Liturgy, you must fast the day before, you must disrobe yourself of all the worldly worries, you must reconcile with everybody with the whole your heart, so that you will commit the bloodless sacrifice well received in the holy altar that is above heavens.

4. The Holy Lamb of God wants you to guard Him and to take care of Him not to get wet and to moldy, asking for it at the due time and drying it up with great order, as also the officiation of the Holy Mystery must be done with great attention and not carelessly, in order not to be there any blemish or disorder.

5. You will advise your parishioners regarding the spiritual aspects, and you will urge them to attend the Church on all Sundays and holydays, and each of them to confess their sins for four times a year, or at least once, and among them whom you will reckon as worthy of it, you will impart them. Likewise, regarding your household too, you will teach them the fear of God, and how to occupy themselves with the prayer, how to keep their cleanness, avoiding the impious gathering, so that others too will take your household as example.

6. You must strive on all ways to accustom yourself to remove from among your parishioners the witchcrafts, the charms, the incantations, and others like those, which are done by most of them in their houses, because of

being those pagan things and unpleasant to God. And if somebody among your parishioners is sick, let him call the priest to pray for him. According to the teaching of the Apostle who says: "For the prayer of the faith will heal the ill one" (Jas. 5: 15).

7. Avoid wedding, either free people of slaves, without sealing them with our seal, neither will you leave that village where you are living in order to go somewhere else, or to serve to another Church, without our knowledge and approval, because if you dare to do otherwise, you will be subjected to the heavy canons.

8. If somebody upsets you, you won't answer him with curses and insults, but you will go and tell that to the chief-priest of that county, and your offender will get wise. Or, when you have a bone of contentious, you are not free to go to the political judgment, because the political judges cannot judge you, for you are a priest.

But, when you will have troubles which need judgment, you will also go to the chief-priest for asking for your justice. And when the chief-priest is unable to appease you, you will come to see us, in order us to set the things right for you. But you must avoid you to be the started of that trouble, because otherwise you will be submitted to canons.

These aspects mentioned above, which have been placed as a big mirror in front of you, look at them, oh, you priest, and if you guard them thoroughly and necessarily, you will know that you will gain the love and the awe from people, and their honor and their help. Your hierarch will rejoice of you and he will love you as a together-servant of the Mysteries of God, and may God strengthen you with His love for people, in order you to guard them unabatedly, forever. Amen.

PIOUS CALINIC THE HERMIT
Horaiţa Monastery – Neamţ
(Century XIX)

This Pious lived in ascesis during the first half of the Century XIX, in a small glade, under the peak of the Horâiciorul Mountain. The old fathers tell that he was a priest, and that he lived there in ascesis for 40 years, and that he lived a holy life and that he had the gift of working miracles. There came to him ill people form villages, and the father healed them with fasting and prayer.

Pious Calinic had, also, a great piousness towards the Mother of the Lord, with Whose icon he was banishing away the evil ghosts from within people, he was banishing away the wild beats from his garden, and he was overcoming the evil thoughts form his thinking. Everywhere he went, he carried with him the icon of the Mother of the Lord and he was delivered from all evil.

The ascesis of Hermit Calinic was this he ate once a day after dusk. He was uttering ceaselessly the *Prayer to Jesus* and he was taking vigil at night with singing of psalms and with prostrations. And his most beloved occupation

was planting and grafting fruit trees. He planted with apple trees, with prune trees, and with walnuts, the whole glade from around his monastic cell. He even had gone to Horaiţa Monastery where he planted and grafted all sorts of fruit trees. During autumn, he joyfully gathered the fruits of his toils, which he shared to the passersby, "on behalf of the Mother of the Lord!".

This was the life and the ascesis of Pious Calinic the Hermit. Reaching an old age, he fell sick and he was bedridden. Then the monks form the hermitage came and told him:

- Father Calinic, we have come to transport you down, so that you could die in monastery.

- By the help of the Mother of the Lord, the old man answered, I will descend on my own! And immediately, taking the icon of the All-Holy Virgin, he went to the Horaiţa Monastery and he was the first to reach there. There he bowed himself down in the church, he confessed his sins to the confessor, he asked to be imparted with the All-Clean Mysteries and, after kissing everybody good bye, he passed away peacefully and with joy in his soul. The place where he lived in ascesis has been called up to these days as "The Glade of Calinic".

PIOUS XENIA THE SCHEMA-NUN
Agapia Monastery
(Centuries XVIII-XIX)[293]

During the first half of the century XIX, at Agapia Monastery, there lived in ascesis a humble and much-progressed spiritually nun, under the name Xenia.

This Pious originated from Iaşi County, and her lineage was that from very pious people. Her parents raised her in fear of God, and they sent her to school. Then, her parents wanted to give her in marriage, but the virgin renounced to the earthly things and, by entering the monastic life, she made herself bride for Christ. Firstly, she lived in ascesis, for a few years, at Socola-Iaşi Monastery, under the guidance of Abbot Elisabeta Costachi. Then, after Agapia Monastery had become a monastery for nuns, the community from Socola went there, so that the young ascetic Schema-Nun Xenia went there too.

In the new monastery, Pious Xenia was living in ascesis especially by serving in the church, and by taking vigil during night, and with reading the holy books, and by uttering *The Prayer to Jesus*. Her task was to sing in the pew, to take care of the church, and in her spare time she composed verses "towards the praise of God and for the comforting of the soul". For, by living a totally chosen life, in fasting, in humbleness, and in sleepless prayer, and by being enlightened with much literacy, Schema-Nun Xenia was found, by God, worthy of composing spiritual verses. And this Pious was renowned in Agapia

[293] According to: Documents of Agapia Monastery, from The State Archives – Bucharest, on the years 1800-1845, and the notes on the Manuscript no. 4720, preserved in original at the Library of the Romanian Academia

Monastery and in the whole Neamț Country, for the holiness of her life and for her chosen churchly verse she wrote. Due to that she was called “the verses maker”.

Her verses are praise verses dedicated to God, and verses of spiritual comforting, as the author called them herself, and they are divided in groups and poems, according to the number of the imperial feasts and placed in the order of the Synaxarion for the whole year. The book of spiritual verses authored by Schema-Nun Xenia was finished in the year 1826. It contains 186 pages with over two thousand verses, accompanied by a beautiful *Preface*. Her verses, which are true hymns and joy songs, they are sprung out of a clean soul that was reconciled with God. They call the whole creation for praise God and to confess His miracles. Thus, the humble Shema-Nun Xenia was the first poetess in the past of our nation, and her “verses” compose the first Romanian book of hymns.

Thus, after living in ascesis Schema-Nun Xenia, for more than 50 years, in ceaseless prayer, in joy, and in singing, and being well-pleasant to her Bridegroom Jesus Christ, she moved peacefully to the heavenly dwelling placed around the first half of the Century XIX.

Pious Fathers From the Second Half of Century XIX

ARCHIMANDRITE NEONIL BUZILĂ
Great Abbot of Neamț Monastery
(1789-1853)

a. His Life

Archimandrite Neonil Buzilă was the most renowned Abbot of Neamț Monastery from the XIX Century. His personality imposes itself in the history of our monasticism by his highly spiritual living and by the wisdom which he raised with so many souls into the love for Christ, and by his devotion which he placed himself and the entire monastery with, in the service of the Church, of the nation, and of the neighbor.

Abbot Neonil was born in Velea Seacă Village – Suceava County, in the year 1789. His parents, though poor, they provided him a chosen education. In the year 1802, when he was only 12 years old, he entered the monastic life, being entrusted to his uncle, Archimandrite Hillary, from Neamț Monastery. In the year 1808 he was tonsured in monasticism, and later on he was ordained deacon and then priest.

Between the years 1827-1832 he was serving priest and confessor to the Metropolitan Cathedral from the Capital of Moldavia, being cherished and sought by all the inhabitants of the city, "for he was sweet at word and accepted and loved by everybody". Between the years 1832-1834, as abbot of Bărboi Monastery from Iaşi, he took care of renewal that holy place, being honored with the rank of archimandrite.

After the death of Abbot Dometian (1834), Archimandrite Neonil was elected Abbot of Neamț Monastery, which he led wisely, for two years (1834-1835). But, consequently to some external intrigues, he was released from abbotship, then reelected and served between the years 1839-1839. He was then replaced for the second time and exiled to the Slatina and Vorona Monasteries, due to his devoted and steadfast character. In the year 1843, Archimandrite Neonil was elected, for the third time, Abbot of Neamț and Secu Monasteries, which he shepherded with an unparalleled skillfulness for other ten years. In this short period, though suffering, he succeeded to bring into the great monastery a new atmosphere of spiritual and cultural renewal.

Elected abbot and confessor, literate monk and skilled writer, devoted steward of the House of God and father of the poor, true servant of the Church and faithful son of his nation, lo, briefly, the great virtues of Abbot Neonil, specific to the Romanian Orthodoxy.

After seven years of suffering, the great Abbot Neonil Buzilă, reconciled with himself, with the people, and with God, he moved into the resting of Christ, being mourned by all the people, on 16th of October 1853, and he was buried under the porch of the church founded by Stephen the Great, and his tomb can be seen even today.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Abbot Neonil consecrated his life to Christ, since his childhood. He became literate and he learnt the depth of the Holy Scriptures from renowned teachers from Neamţ Monastery, as there were Hieromonk Iosif and Schemamonk Platou, and he learnt the craftsmanship of the monastic ascesis from the best confessors of that community. They were saying about him, and that was proven later on, the he surpassed all his teachers and confessors.

2. Archimandrite Neonil was, for his entire life, very zealous for the House of the Lord. In the year 1821, when many churches were plundered and destroyed, and their cultic objects were taken away, by rebels, he was appointed by the Abot of Neamţ Monastery, Hillary, to hide deep in the forest the miracle-doer icon of the Mother of the Lord. Almost two years later, Neonil was the one bringing back the icon of the Mother of the lord to Neamţ Monastery.

3. In the same year (1821), when Secu Monastery was set in fire by Turks, and the monks there walled up the treasury of that monastery in a hiding place within monastery, Father Neonil, taking order from the abbot, he sneaked in, accompanied by Hermit Zosimus, and they breached that wall and took the treasure and they hid all the holy vessels deep in the forest, and so they saved those cultic objects from fire and desecration.

4. The gentleness of his heart and his skillfulness at Holy Scriptures, made of Archimandrite Neonil a renowned confessor in Neamţ Monastery and all over Moldavia. Especially in Iaşi, during that period that he was priest at the Cathedral, he reached to be confessor and secret adviser both to the Voivode and to the Metropolitan, as also to a but part of the capital city's inhabitants. Rich and poor, laypeople and monks, literates and simple people, peasants and city-dwellers, all of them were seeking him and they were nourishing their souls with his teachings, "for he was sweet at word and accepted and loved by everybody".

5. On one occasion, a debtor from Iaşi City ran to Archimandrite Neonil. That debt or owed 40,000 to Metropolitanate, and the debtor begged Neonil to mediate for being absolved of that debt. Father Neonil saw the poverty of the debtor and he mediated to Metropolitan Veniamin, and the Metropolitan forgave the whole debt to that debtor.

6. Being endowed by God with many spiritual gifts, Archimandrite Neonil was elected Abbot of Neamţ Monastery, and he served in that position for thirteen years. So, because of seeing that the level of the spiritual life in Neamţ Monastery was decreasing, he composed for his community a new Monastic Founding Charter, which be joined with, harmoniously, the prayer and the ascesis, the manual labor and the churchly serving.

The most important rules for spiritual growth, established by Abbot Neonil, were those:

- daily confession of sins by the whole congregation;

- mandatory attendance of each monk and brother to the program of the church, especially to Matins and to the Holy Liturgy;

- occupying at monastic cells with the prayer-program, with the *Prayer to Jesus*, and with the reading of the writings of the Holy Fathers;

- the total forbiddance of any gathering to the monastic cells;

- accomplishing one's tasks in monastery with love and without protesting;

- the living of the congregation in consummate harmony, unity, and humbleness;

- eating meat was totally forbidden in that community;

- eating only in refectory; no one was allowed to eat in his monastic cell, except the sick ones.

7. For the good management of the monastic wealth and in order to make that wealth available to everyone, Abbot Neonil established in his Charter the followings:

- the cessation of any external meddling into the monastery's businesses; the monastery's wealth cannot be taken away by or to be given away to anybody, without the consensus of the community;

- the monastery's income will be used for supporting the community and for restoring the monastic cells, as also for benefactions works and for giving of alms, as: building churches in poor villages, endowing churches with cultic objects and books, building public hospitals and public schools, founding some pharmacies for monks and laypeople, and others;

- building an infirmary to Neamț Monastery, destined for providing medical assistance for the monks from the monastery, for the monks from hermitages, and for the monks living by themselves in the wilderness;

- opening a monastic school in the monastery for beginner brothers;

- greatly extending the printing press and the book-binding shop; there were printed all sorts of churchly books and of books for teaching, supported by monastery's income, and which were shared, for free, to other monasteries and to churches from cities and villages; all of those objectives were fully accomplished.

8. Abbot Neonil established that the confession of the community's members to be made daily, on each evening, and the Impartation to be made weekly. Also, it was mandatory to participate, daily, to Matins and to the Holy Liturgy. They who missed those, without having blessed causes, were punished.

For small mistakes the penance was a day of fasting and prostrations. And for grave mistakes, the perpetrator was forbidden from the Holy Impartation or he was sent, as punishment, to another monastery. By those, the level of the spiritual life increased much in Neamț Monastery, and the division among brothers was removed.

9. During his abbotship, Archimandrite Neonil was engulfed by zeal for the Church of Christ and fore the salvation of his nation, and he built and

endowed, using the income of his monastery, numerous places for prayer, among which: the belltower, the Good Annunciation Chapel, the refectory, and the southern wing of the enclosure from Neamţ Monastery; the Saint John the Theologian Church and the cemetery from Neamţ Monastery; the church of Vovidenia Hermitage from nearby; the church of Topoliţa Village – Neamţ, and the church of Preuteşti Village – Neamţ, both those churches being endowed with the necessary cultic objects by the abbot himself; the Saint John the New from Suceava Chapel, from the monastery's infirmary; The Saint Lazarus Chapel from Tg. Neamţ Hospital; the enclosure of Secu Monastery which was twice consumed by fire; and others.

10. The Great Abbot, being very merciful and loving-of people, he took care, according to his possibilities, of sick people too. Thus, he built at Neamţ Monastery an extended infirmary, relacing that that was burnt in the year 1841, destined to the old monks and for the sick members of the community, and for providing medical assistance also to those who were living in ascesis in the hermitages and in the forests from around the monastery, and even for laypeople. Nest to the infirmary he set up a pharmacy. He also appointed there a medic and some nurses. And at Tg. Neamţ he built a big two-floors hospital, capable of accommodating up to 200 patients, having a chapel in its middle, where a confessor-monk was serving daily. He also built a big pharmacy "like there was no other in Moldavia", and paid a physician with the monastery's money. In those two hospitals many sufferings were alleviated and all the patients were receiving free medical assistance and treatment. The hospital and the pharmacy were subsidized by monastery.

11. Abbot Neonil was also very-much-loving of literacy, and he wanted to help to enlighten the monks and the people, so that he built in Tg. Neamţ City a public school having four classrooms, able to accommodate up to 200 children. He also built in Vânători Village - Neamţ, a public school having two classrooms, and he also endowed both mentioned schools with the necessary furniture and with renowned libraries, and in both schools the children were taught for free, their tuitions being paid by the monastery. And for the monks he founded in the monastery a monastic school, situated at the sought of the enclosure, and he entrusted that school to the taught Archimandrite Filaret Scriban. There were being taught: The Old and the New Testament, the Rules of the Monastic Life, the Music of Psalms, the Typicon, the grammar, the history, and Greek and Slavonic[294].

12. In order to provide the monks with the teachings of the Holy Fathers, Abbot Neonil much enriched the Library of Neamţ Monastery, with all kinds of manuscripts, patristic books, and cultic books, like there was no other library in Moldavia[295]. In addition to the books which were being read in the monastic

[294] All the foundations of Abbot Neonil – monastic cells, churches, hospitals, and schools – have been preserved in a functioning state until today.

[295] A big part of that Library was consumed by fire in November 1862.

cells, the Abbot established to be read, on a daily basis, in church and in refectory, the words of the Holy Fathers.

13. The greatest cultural work of Abbot Neonil was that of printing books. In order to satisfy the thirst for spiritual knowledge of everybody, and in order to endow the churches and the monasteries with the necessary cultic books, he extended the printing shop of the monastery and he replaced the old wooded printing-presses with metallic printing-presses. To the printing activity were appointed over 60 monks and brothers. Some of them were translating from Greek, others were casting letters, others were putting the letters in texts, others were preparing natural inks, others were working on the printing-presses, others were proofing the printed pages, others were binding the books in calf leather, others were carving ornaments in olive-tree and on pear-tree woods.

14. The love of Abbot Neonil for Church and for his Nation urged him to undertake many other benefaction-works. Because he saw the need which some hermitages and churches from Moldavia were in, he was sending everywhere cultic books and of Orthodox teaching, for free. The mercifulness and the zeal of the Great Abbot went beyond Moldavia's borders, and the books printed at Neamţ Monastery reached to The Romanian Country, to Transylvania, to Mount Athos, to Bessarabia, and to Balkans.

Immediately as he heard that hundreds of churches from Transylvania were being plundered and lacking cultic books, he sent, for several times, monks over the Carpathian Mountains, transporting books in carts pulled by oxen, to Bishop Andrei Şaguna. Thus, the mercifulness and the kindness of Abbot Neonil became known to everybody.

15. It was said about him that regardless how concerned was him with all sorts of cares for the monastery, he never let aside his prayer program and his monastic canon. And from Matins, from Vespers, and from the Holy Liturgy, he didn't miss even for a single day. He also visited the monks and the brothers to their monastic cells, to the place where they were fulfilling their tasks, to the infirmary, to the printing press, or to the refectory. He sometimes went to visit also the monks from Secu, from Sihăstria, from Sihla, from Pocrov, from Icoana, and from the other hermitages which were under his supervision. He reached everywhere and he comforted all the monks and brothers with his full of wisdom and gentleness words.

16. In the year 1847 a cholera epidemic hunted the Moldavian Country, reaping out the helpless. At that time, many people were delivered from death by running to monasteries. At Neamţ Monastery, Abbot Neonil sheltered that year numerous city-dweller families from Iaşi, feeding them and accommodating them. Immediately as one fell sick, the Abbot sent them to bow down before the miracles-working icon of the Mother of the Lord, and they immediately got healed.

17. They also said about this Great Abbot that in the year 1846, getting sick according to the unknown judgments of God, and being forced to stay in

his monastic cell until his death, he never protested in his heart. But from there, from his bed of suffering, he strived to lead the community of the monastery, including all monastery's subordinated units, counting around 600 monks. On the daily basis, there came to see him fathers from the counsel, abbots, confessors, and brothers, in order to ask him for advice, and nobody disobeyed him.

18. On his bed of suffering, Abbot Neonil didn't stop advising and teaching everybody on the path of salvation, both by word and by writing. This was because he was endowed by God with much power in his words.

- Brothers, he said, do not hesitate to sweeten yourselves with the spiritual fragrance coming out of the good-smelling flowers of the understanding Paradise, namely out of the torments and of the pains of the Holy Martyrs and out of the toils of the Pious Fathers. These ones were sown by the unblemished Bride of Christ, namely by our Holy Mother, the Church of the East, and they were raised through good-faith, in order to bring to Christ, her true Bridegroom, a good fragrance, and whose fragrance is loved by Him, according to the saying: "To the fragrance of your myrrh I will run" (*Son of Songs* 1: 7).

19. He also said:

- On these spiritual flowers, namely on the saints mentioned by the Church's Menaion, let's honor them with clean love as the friends of God. And among these, especially our Master and Birth-Giver of God and forever Virgin Mary, let's praise Her faith and with untold joy, as One Who in an untold manner, by the word of the archangel, She conceived the Son and the Word of the Without Beginning God, from the Holy Ghost, and She born Him with body, towards our salvation, of the people.

20. He also said:

- Brothers, please receive, with Christian love and with zeal, the prayers of the saints honored in the right-worshipping Church, for they are the mediators of our salvation, into the Kingdom of the Eternal Father.

21. On some other occasion he taught, saying:

- Brothers, we owe to remind out spiritual renewals, and we owe to improve ourselves on a daily basis, as long as we are in this life.

22. Abbot Neonil said also these:

- Let's renew ourselves, brothers, by disrobing ourselves - according to the Apostles word - of the former man, by repentance and by clean confession, and let's put on the new man by working the good deeds, so that our exit from this life to find us straightened and prepared, after our tents will have been broken and after they will be raised again at the sound of the trumpet, so that we will be found worthy of receiving the fruits of our toils, feasting not once a year, but ceaselessly. Not in breakable tents and shacks as the Jews, but in those dwelling places not built by hand, of the first-born.

23. He also added:

- Let's honor, with the whole our soul, the saints of each day and let's especially strive, as much as we can, to follow their living, for, by doing this, we

will be found worthy of being inheritors of the eternal delectation and of the Heavenly Kingdom into our Lord Christ.

24. Abbot Neonil also said:

- Let's honor, with true faith, our true God and Mediator Jesus Christ. Let's bring to Him not earthly flowers that decay and wither, but incorruptible and heavenly flowers. Namely, the holy martyrs who were made red in their blood, as some all-beautiful roses, and also the all-pious fathers who by their sweats and toils have elevated their souls more than the good-fragrance lilies.

25. In the autumn of the year 1852, the Abbot Neonil, because of feeling his end near, he entrusted his will to Metropolitan Sophrony Miclescu, accompanied by these words:

- I am dying upset on myself because of unworthily bearing the name of one of the small apostles of our Lord. Ending, until the second coming, all the discussions with your eminence and with everyone else, tripling and quadrupling the tears and my unworthy prayers in order you not to forget about me and about this brotherhood. Bless this eternal trip of mine, forgive me, untie me, and may God make us worthy to see one another all of us again into the Kingdom of the Eternal Father, into the joy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and into the enlightenment of the gift of the All-Holy and of-life-Maker Holy Ghost. Amen.

NEONIL
Archimandrite and Abbot
of the Holy Neamţ and Secu Monasteries
1853, October 13th

HIEROSCHEMAMONK VALERIAN
Sihăstria Monastery – Neam
(1790-1860)

This father originated from Transylvania. Wanting to serve to Christ, he left his parental house at the age of fifteen. He crossed the Carpathian Mountains and he settled himself down to Sihăstria Hermitage, in the year 1805. At that time, the spiritual life from Pocrov, Sihăstria, and Sihla, it was renowned in Moldavia and it attracted many monks who loved the quietude, from all quarters of the country. After five years as apprentice, he received the monastic scheme in the year 1810, being tonsured in monasticism by the Abbot of the Neamţ Monastery himself, Archimandrite Silvester.

In the year 1821, after Sihăstria Hermitage was burnt down and destroyed by Turks in their fights against the Etheria rebellion, Father Valerian become a hermit in the forests from around that hermitage. Then he turned back to the hermitage and helped to renew the monastic cells, the church, and the spiritual life from Sihăstria. Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, seeing the

zeal of Schemamonk Valerian for the House of the Lord, he ordained him deacon and then priest and he appointed him Abbot of Sihătria Hermitage.

For almost twenty years, Hieroschemamonk Valerian advised, with much wisdom, his spiritual sons, who were serving to Christ, day and night. He also took care of the other hermits who were living in ascesis in the ancestral forests nearby the hermitage, giving them food and the Body and the Blood of the lord. At that time and in that area, there were living in ascesis tens of hermits.

In addition to the spiritual life, Abbot Valerian took care also of the good management of the hermitage. In the year 1837 he built a wooden chapel, consecrated under the patronage of the Holy Parents Joachim and Anna, and nearby he also built a new block of monastic cells. Thus, Hieroschemamonk Valerian was one of the most important Abbot of Sihăstria Hermitage during the Century XIX. Under his leadership, the Hermitage experienced an epoque of great spiritual flourishing.

Reaching the age of 70, Pious Valerian the Schemamonk passed away, peacefully, and he was buried next to the church.

PIOUS PACHOMIUS THE HERMIT
Ialomicioara Cave Hermitage
(Century XIX)

Pious Pachomius was a great hermit renowned in that area. The tradition specifies that he originated from Făgăraş Country. So, for he loved Christ, he entered the Ialomicioara Cave Hermitage, somewhen around the years 1815-1820. After becoming a monk, he continued living in the hermitage, for a little while. Then, after getting blessing from the famous abbot of Ialomicioara, Hieroschemamonk Gherasim Popescu, he withdrew himself in a place situated higher up than the hermitage, on The Old Lady Mountain. There he dug for himself a shack and covered in with wood, and he lived there in harsh ascesis, until his death. For the whole week he lived in fasting and in prayer, and on Sundays he came to the hermitage where he attended the religious service, he confessed his thoughts to his abbot, and he receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and then he hiked again on the mountain. At his monastic cell, he was eating only nettles, potatoes, and dry bread.

For his much toil, Schemamonk Pachomius received from God the gift of knowing the future and of healing the illnesses, reaching to be renowned in the villages from around that area. But he didn't accept anyone to visit him, nor he accepted gifts from the people. He only accepted the prayers of the ill ones, and immediately he prayed for somebody, his request was fulfilled.

Reaching an old age and getting sick, God unveiled him the day and the hour of his death. So, he was praying to God to be that unveiled to the Abbot, so that the Abbot to bring him the All-Clean Mysteries. At night,

Hieroschemamonk Gherasim, the Abbot of Ialomicioara Cave, heard a voice: "Go on the mountain and impart Pachomius!".

The next day the Abbot hiked at the monastic cell of Pious Pachomius, and he imparted him. Immediately after, Pachomius died. So, after officiating the religious service of the burial, he buried him there, and he turned to the hermitage, praising God.

SCHEMA-NUN SAFTA BRÂNCOVEANU
Văratec Monastery
(1776-1857)

This Schema-Nun, famous in our monasteries due to her donations, she was the daughter of Teodor Balş from Iaşi, the Moldavia's Regent. She was sent to school form a young age, she learnt well the Greek language, and at home she was raised by her mother Elisabeta in the fear of God and in respect for the holy churches.

In the year 1793 she was given in marriage to governor Grigore Brâncoveanu, who was among the most important members of the government of The Romanian Country, but they didn't have any children. After many dangers and sufferings, her husband passed away in the year 1832, and widow Safta Brâncoveanu turned back to Iaşi, to her parental home. Then, in the same year, he entered the monastic ascesis together with her mother, Elisabeta, at Văratec Monastery. There she comforted the sadness of her heart through prayers and tears. Then, after engaging herself to Christ and after receiving the monastic crown, she forgot about the worldly troubles and about the pain of the widowhood.

The greatest virtue of Schema-Nun Safta Brâncoveanu was the giving of alms. Originating from a noble family and having a great wealth, she shared that wealth to poor, to churches, and to monasteries, following the example of her forerunners. When she was still living together with her husband in Bucharest, she made many donations as sums of money, vestments, books, icons, and holy vessels, to the Oltenia's monasteries founded by Constantin Brâncoveanu, as also to Saint Nicholas Church from Şcheii Braşovului. In Bucharest, she also restored the Little Lady Bălaşa Church, that was built by the daughter of the Great Voivode. And, after she embraced the monasticism, she continued to make even more donations to the holy churches.

She made the most numerous donations to Văratec Monastery. She smelted her silver jewelries and the silver was used for binding the Gospels, the icons, the candlesticks, and for making holy vessels and pedestals for crossed for the altar. Also, to Văratec Monastery Schema-Nun Safta donated priestly vestments embroiled with golden thread, cultic, books, and many other things. Also, she bestowed vestments, books, and icons, to the other monasteries from Neamţ Country. And in the year 1851 she donated hierarchal vestments

embroiled with golden thread, to Saint Hierarch Calinic, which he was buried with, later on.

So, reaching an old age, Schema-Nun Safta Brâncoveanu passed away to the eternal dwelling places, on 8th of August 1857, and she was buried near to her mother's grave, namely Schema-Nun Elisabeta Balş.

ARCHIMANDRITE IRINARH ROSETTI
Horaita Monastery – Mount Tabor
(1771-1859)

a. His life

This pious archimandrite, abbot, confessor, and hermit, was one of the great monks of the Romanian monasticism from Century XIX.

Pious Irinarh was born in the year 1771 in Focşani City, to the famous family of Moldavian member of the government, called Rosetti. His parents, Nicholas and Pelagia, raised him into the fear of God and they sent him to school for learning Romanian and Greek, according to the custom of that time. His parents wanted to see him married at the age of twenty, but he, secretly, ran to Neamţ Monastery in order to become a monk there. After three years of obedience, he was tonsured in monasticism, and then he was appointed as apprentice to the monastery's printing press, that was recently inaugurated. There he reached to be a skilled typographer, and he worked to print *The Lives of the Saints*.

Wanting to advance into the monastic ascesis and to follow the advice of his spiritual father, Hieroschemamonk Iosif the Hermit from Văratec Monastery, he left Neamţ Monastery and he became a hermit in the forests from around Nechit Hermitage - from Neamţ Country. There he lived in quietude for 12 years, reaching to be a great worker of *The Prayer to Jesus*. In the year 1823 he left for the Holy Mountain, but he was stopped in Bucharest, by his friend, Metropolitan Gregory, in order to organize metropolitan's printing-press. After three years of obedience to the Hungaria-Wallachia Metropolitanate, in the year 1826, he left for Mount Athos, where he stayed only for two years, because of the Balkan Uprisings.

In the year 1829 he turned back to Moldavia and became a hermit on Horaiţa Mountain. In the next year he was made priest and archimandrite of Iaşi by Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi. In the year 1831 he founded Horaiţa Monastery and became its first abbot, shepherding that monastery until the year 1843 sand forming there a community with over 70 monks. Then, he left as abbot one of his disciples and he left for the Holy Places accompanied by Hierodeacon Nectarie Banul, and the settled down on Mount tabor. There they lived for 16 years in consummate anchoritism and in desiring God, enduring many temptations from people and from devils. In the year 1859 he started the

building of a big stone church on Tabor, in the honor of the Transfiguration of the Lord, but he didn't succeed to finish it.

On 26th December 1859, the Pious Abbot and Confessor Irinarh moved to the eternal life, being mourned by his spiritual sons, and he was buried in the church he started to build, and which was finished by his disciple. After a few years, his bones were moved on the southern side of the church, next to his foundation.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Archimandrite Irinarh Rosetti wanted, since his childhood, to serve Christ, but he was sad because of his parent not allowing him. One night, while all of them were at a wedding party, the young John, disgusted of the earthly thing, he went out, he changed his coat for that of a faithful friend, and after making himself with the holy cross, he left for Neamț Monastery.

2. He walked for the entire night, and at dawn he fell asleep at the edge of a forest. And lo, a beautifully dressed up young man drew near him and told him:

- Do you want to become a monk?

- Yes, I do, if God wants me, John answered. Then that young man materialized an image of Mount Tabor and told him:

- Do you see this mountain? If you want to become a monk, you will climb this mountain. Do not deviate either to the right or to the left, but go directly on the top of that mountain.

Waking up, John understood that he must live in ascesis on Mount Tabor.

3. After he had left for monastery, his parents searched for him everywhere, but they weren't able to find him. Then they sent people to search for him in all monasteries, even at the Holy Mountain. Only after two years one of the people form his father's household, who gave him his coat at the leaving, he found him at Neamț Monastery. So, that man came back and told to his parents:

- I have e found your son John at Neamț Monastery. But now you can do nothing to him, because now he is a monk. And his parents rejoiced for finding him healthy and for he chose the good side. Then he thanked God for God deigned to receive sacrifice from their toils.

4. Archimandrite Irinarh told to his disciples that after he was received to Neamț Monastery, for three years he was appointed to the lowest tasks, for trying his patience and humbleness. Then, after the abbot saw him zealously fulfilling all the commandments, he dressed him up as monk and he appointed him to the printing press, as helper of the chief typographer[296].

5. Learning the craftsmanship of the printing of books, Father Irinarh reached to be a famous typographer and he worked for four years to printing

[296] That happened in the year 1807 when was founded the first printing press at Neamț Monastery.

the holy books, “helped by other 30 monks”, for he had a great zeal for adorning the churches with books for religious service and fore teaching.

6. Father Irinarh the typographer rejected deeply the earthly things, loving the poverty for the whole his life. He was content only with the food and the clothes provided him by the community. When his father died, a trustee came from his relatives and brought him 200 golden pounds. That some was his inheritance right, sent him by his mother. But the humble ascetic, on that very hour, he gave that sum of money to the abbot for the monastery’s needs.

7. Being him lit up with the longing for the hermit-like life, Father Irinarh left the community and withdrew himself on Nechit Mountain, not far from the hermitage bearing the same name. There he lived alone for 12 years, in fasting and in prayer, eating bread and drinking water, once a day, at dusk, and on Saturday and on Sunday tasting some food containing oil.

8. Wanting to progress even more in the hermit-like ascesis, Pious Irinarh left the forests of Nechit for Mount Athos. But in Bucharest he was stopped by Metropolitan Gregory who asked him to found a printing press for the needs of the Church. And he stayed for three whole years in Bucharest, until he organized the printing press and he taught a few monks the craftsmanship of printing books. Then he left for the Holy Mountain.

9. His disciple said that Pious Irinarh spent two years in fasting and in prayer under the leak of Athos. Then, because of the often unrests, he turned back to Moldavia and settled himself down at Horăicoara-Neamţ Hermitage. Because of seeing that the monks form there had no spacious enough church, and the fact that that hermitage was often hit by winds and storms, he decided to build on a lower place, near to Horaiţa Mountain, a new church and new monastic cells for the monks, with the money he gathered from believers.

10. The same disciple said that in the spring of the year 1830, Father Irinarh went to Iaşi together with him, to ask for the blessing of Metropolitan Veniamin, for starting the building works. But Veniamin heard that Irinarh originated form a noble family and he saw him pious and wise, so that he asked him to stay and, against his will, he made him priest and archimandrite. Then, giving him the blessing for building the church, he let him leave in peace, and he sent him six carts with food for the workers.

11. At the beginning of the Lent, both Irinarh and his disciple descended from the mountain to search for a place where to build their monastery. So, sensing the Chapel of the Mother of the Lord, and adding many other prayers, they marked a few fir trees with the sign of the cross, as the place for alter. On that evening, they lit up a fire and remained there. Pious Irinarh prayed for the whole night for God to unveil to him where to build the church. And he suddenly saw a light, as a flame of fire, upon a fir tree. Then he woke his disciple up, they took their vestments, and they sang together the Chapel of the Mother of the lord, as they drew near to the place where that light appeared. Then, after they had found the fir tree, he said:

- Here will be the altar!

After a few days, they started the building of the church. So was founded Horaiţa Monastery.

12. After finishing the church to the patronage of The Baptism of the Lord, and the monastic cells for the monks, Irinarh was appointed abbot. And there gathered around him, in a few years, up to 70 monks, among whom "12 were priests, 4 were deacons, 4 were singers, and the rest of them were appointed to diverse tasks. Thus, the old man advised well the monastery and the community, as a true father, until the year 1843. Then, leaving Archimandrite Germogen Buhuş abbot in his place, he left for Jerusalem.

13. After Pious Irinarh and his disciple Hierodeacon Nectarie Banul had bowed themselves down in front of the Lord's Tomb, they left for Galilee and they tarried for five years in Nazareth, until they learnt Arabic. Then, the old man told to his disciple:

- My son, hire a man with two donkeys, place the luggage on them, and let's go to Mount Tabor, where the lord commanded me to go, through His angel, in order us to live there into wilderness.

- Father, the disciple told him, Mount Tabor is full of thieves and of wild beasts. Will we take our luggage and give it to the thieves, and so will we remain naked?

- My son, I have bestowed this luggage to Mount Tabor. If Christ wants to guard it, He will guard it. And if He leaves it into the hands of the thieves, He will give us another one instead, for He is rich. Then, the disciple remained silent, and they both climbed Mount Tabor, being covered by the gift of God and delivered from the seen and unseen thieves.

14. Hid disciple said that he lived in ascesis, together with his spiritual father, for 16 years, in the caves and in the forests on the top of Mount Tabor, enduring many temptations, and fear from people and from wild beasts, hunger, thirst, need, and heat. For the first years they lived in caves. Then they started to repair three old and derelict monastic cells. Then they gathered stone for masonry, they prepared lime, they gathered rain water in stone basins, and they collected help form Christians. And in the summer of the year 1859 they started the building of a new church in the honor of the Transfiguration of the Lord, on the ruined of the old Orthodox church that had been destroyed in the Century XIII. Their church was the first Romanian Church at the Holy Places.

15. Hierodeacon Nectarie, his disciple, also said that the inhabitants from the areas of Nazareth, of Cana Galilee, of Ptolemais, were cherishing Pious Irinarh very much. All of them were running to him for advice, for reading, and for confessing their sins, for they had much awe and love for the hermit living in the wilderness. And God gave him also the gift of healing, so that if he read for some ill person, that person got healed; and they who couldn't have children came to his holiness with faith and he read them prayers and he blessed them and the told them:

- According to your faith, my sons, may God listen to your request! And their request was immediately fulfilled.

16. His disciple also said that once came to see the old man, on Tabor, a craftsman of stone masonry, from Nazareth, Called Iosif, together with his wife, because they had no children after eight years of marriage. Then the Pious prayer for them, he blessed them, and he let them go to their home. After almost a year, the two husbands turned back to Father Irinarh, carrying their first child in their arms, and asked Irinarh to baptize their child.

17. Father Nectarie also said these:

- One day, a Mohhamedan woman from Daburia Village, from the foot of the mountain, climbed on Tabor Mountain carrying her child in her arms, and getting closer to the old man, she told him, crying:

- Have mercy on me, father, read to my child, for he is sick of death!

- Who have you come to me, he answered her, for I am a Christian priest? Go to your priest and to the doctors.

- I am not going to anybody else. I have come to God and to your holiness, and I believe that if you read to my son, he will be healed.

And the Father seeing her faith, he blessed and sanctified the water, then he sprayed the child with that water, he read a few prayers to the child, and he marked the child with the sign of the Holy cross, and told her:

- Have faith in God, woman, and go in peace, for your son will be healthy.

Rightly so, as they arrived home, the child got healthy. Joyfully, that woman talked about that miracle to the entire village.

18. The disciple said also that, when the imam heard about the healing of that child, he got angry, and he told to the husband of that woman:

- Why do you allow your women to go and see that infidel from that mountain to read to your children?

Then, that man got angry and said:

- Tomorrow morning, I am going to shoot him.

So, climbing on Mount Tabor, he entered the monastic cell of Pious Irinarh, trying to kill him. But the old man was praying into forest. Then, by the will of God, the Arab man got blind and, after leaving the monastic cell, he was unable to find his way back. The father met him and asked him:

- Where are you from, man, and whom are you searching for?

- Forgive me, Father, for I have done wrong to you! I am the husband of that women whose child you have healed. I thank you, man of God! But the chiefs of the village rebuked me and I've come here to kill you. But God haven't wanted to allow me to harm you, and He punished me, for lo, I am blind, and I cannot see where I am going.

Then the Pious, having mercy of him, took him by his hand and told him:

- Come, for I am going to show you're the path, for now, by the gift of God you will see, for you have admitted your mistake and for you have repented for it. May God forgive you, go in peace.

Fron that instant the Arab man saw and he descended back, healthy, to his home.

19. On some other occasion, several villagers climbed Mount Tabor in search for firewood, and one of them entered the monastic cell of the Pious and stole a small vessel with oil, in order to take it home. But when he arrived home and tried to pour the content of the small vessel into his bigger oil vessel, his vessel suddenly broke and the whole content spilled on the floor.

20. On some other day, some Arab peasants came on the mountain from Nain Village, in order to hew down firewood. So, seeing next to the monastic cell of Pious Irinarh a straight and very nice tree, they told him:

- Old man, allow us to hew down this tree for we need it.

- The whole forest is at your disposal, the father answered to them, but let this one to me for I sit in his shadow, for it is near to our church.

- Why should we listen to an infidel? answered they, and they kept asking for that tree. Then the father told them:

- You can hew it down, but you are wrong, and you must know that you won't rejoice of this tree!

So, after they had hewed down that tree, while they were descending the mountain, they fell with it and the almost died. Then, when the placed that tree in the attic, that attic broke and the tree fell and wounded almost all of them. Then they cast that tree outside the village and nobody dared to get it up anymore.

21. Father Nectarie also said that, one time, a fearsome dragon hid in the caves from Mount Tabor. Haphazardly, Pious Irinarh entered a cave and came face to face with that dragon. Then the beast started swelling and hissing in a menacing manner, And the old man told to that dragon:

- Shut up, to not get angry, for I haven't come to do you any harm. And the beast got appeased. But the old man's heart hurt for three days because of the venomous breathing.

Hearing about that dragon, the Christians from Nazareth came on Mount Tabor and asked the old man:

- Tell us, father, where did you see the dragon, for we have come to shoot it.

- No, my sons, the Pious answered them, do not do any harm to that dragon, for I have made peace with it. I promised him not to do him any harm, as the dragon did not harm to me, neither to someone else. But if I allowed you to kill that dragon, I would mistake in front of God, because I was a liar and a peace-transgressor. Then, if one of you got killed, I would be guilty for that too. But let it be, for the dragon too is the creature of God and God sent it to me in order to give me a big scare, in order I not to get proud for living in Tabor. Then the people got appeased and, obeying the advice of the Pious, they turned back to Nazareth.

22. The disciple also confessed this secret thing, that his abbot, Archimandrite Irinarh achieved the gift of the all-holy *Prayer to Jesus*. While he was staying alone in the Nechit forests, he lived in a deep ascesis with fasting, with prayer, and with vigils, and with tears towards God and towards the All-Clean His Mother, asking from them the gift of the prayer of the mind. And God

listened to his request and God bestowed him the prayer that was being worked ceaselessly within his heart. But the father kept that very secret in order nobody to find out, for he was running away from the glory from people, in order him bot to fall into pride. Only his confessor, Pious Iosif the Hermit, from Văratec Monastery, knew that secret.

23. Father Nectarie also said that, while both of them were living as hermits on Mount Tabor, he drew near to his spiritual father and daringly, he asked him:

- Honored father, Old Gherasim, the hermit from Dălhăuţi, told me that you have the prayer of the mind.

And Pious Irinarh answered him:

- My son, really, I had it for a little while, but I left it. For, while I was sitting into wilderness those 12 years, I was praying to God and to His All-Clean Mother to bestow me that gift. While I was praying, at midnight, my monastic cell was suddenly illuminated and I was surrounded by flames of fire, but that fire didn't burn me; and my heart started shouting out loudly: Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner! And I got scared and I feared that that could be a devilish deceit. On the next day I went to my confessor, Father Iosif[297], who had the prayer of the mind and who worked several miracles, and I confessed myself to him. And he gave me as penance not to sleep lied on the bed, but, sitting in my monastic cell, I to sleep only for one hour in 24 hours. Turning myself back to my monastic cell, I tried to follow the commandment of my confessor, but I couldn't. After seeing that I was unable to do that, I left that prayer.

24. The disciple asked Pious Irinarh, later on:

- Honored father, if somebody achieved the prayer of the mind and then he leaves it, but later on he wants to have it again and he asks God for it, will God give him that prayer again?

- Yes, the old man answered, but he must want to ask for it.

25. The disciple said also these things about the work of the Father Irinarh:

- I saw him, often, having his eyes full of tears, but he controlled himself not to allow his tears flowing down his eyes, because that would allow people to know his work. On other occasions, I saw his lips moving, but if he felt that I was looking at him, he would stop immediately. But by his words and by my sight I knew that he had the prayer and that he was working it. But he told me that in a concealed manner, in order I to doubt that and not to tell to other people about that.

26. Pious father Irinarh Rosetti received from God the gift of the foretelling, ever since he was living in ascesis in Nechit wilderness from Neamţ Mountains. According to the witness of his disciple, Hierodeacon Nectarie Banul, he foretold three years in advance that Metropolitan Veniamin will leave

[297] Pious Iosif the Hermit, the confessor of the Văratec Monastery († 1828), was a famous teacher of the *Prayer to Jesus*, for the whole Moldavia.

his chair and he will appease himself in a monastery, as it happened. He foretold for the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cyril, that the monks will force him out of his chair, and that happened exactly so.

He also foretold for a monk from Crete, called Nephon, that he will become hierarch in Nazareth, and that happened too. He also foretold three years in advance about the uprisings which happened to Liban and Damascus, and that too happened as he told it. Four years in advance he saw finished the Romanian church on Tabor, and two years before he passed away, he foretold that his disciple will finish the church he started building, and that his disciple will be made archimandrite and abbot in his place, and that his disciple will write about his life.

All these foretellings of Pious Irinarh happened exactly as he foretold them, at the due time.

27. Sarting the building of the church on Mount Tabor, Archimandrite Irinarh Rosetti didn't have the joy of seeing it finished. In the autumn of the year 1859, when the building was half finished, the money and the stone gathered for the building ran out. At the same time, an order came from authorities to stop the building until he will receive a written approval from Constantinople. So, the old man, feeling his end near, he was joyfully waiting for his liberation form the body's bonds.

28. While Pious Irinarh was sick, his disciple came close to him and asked him, crying:

- Honored father, if you will pass away from this life, what should I do? I won't be able to sit alone, in this wilderness, without your holiness.

- And what do you reckon to do? the old man told him.

- I reckon to go to the Holy Mountain, or back in our country, to a monastery.

- My son, I am advising you not to leave this mountain, for Christ Himself sanctified it, by showing part of His power and the light of His godhead. Do not reckon that it was our will that brought us here. But He brought both me and you, for He wanted that through us the strangers and the poor to show His godlike power, to build His holy church and a monastery on Tabor, and to bring them to their initial state.

- Honored father, I don't have the gift of your holiness. Your holiness has been having a gift from God, so that the Christians have been loving and respecting you, while the Arabs have been scared and they have been fearing to harm you, by seeing the miracles worked by God through your holiness.

- My son, God hasn't been working the miracles for me, because I am a sinner, but for this holy place of His, in order to shut up the mouth of the pagans and to scare them not to upset us, and for they to let us work His vineyard.

After these few words, Pious Irinarh stopped talking. He lived a for a few more hours, and he yielded his soul in the hands of God, on 26th of December 1859.

29. Hierodeacon Nectarie said also that, immediately as the abbot passed away, the notice was spread everywhere. Then the believers from Nazareth and Cana Galilee, his spiritual sons form villages, men and women, were running to Mount Tabor so kiss the relics of Pious Irinarh and to take his last blessing.

30. He also said that at the burial service officiated for Archimandrite Irinarh, there came the Metropolitan of Nazareth with priests and with many people from Galilee. And when it was about burying him, some of the present people were breaking, out of piousness, small pieces from the coat of their kind adviser, abbot, and father. Then he was buried in the church founded by himself.

This was the life and these were the deeds of Pious Archimandrite Irinarh Rosetti from Mount Tabor.

All-Pious Father Irinarh, pray to God for us!

ARCHIMANDRITE BESSARION FĂGĂRĂŞANUL
The Founder of Coco Monastery
(1779-1862)[298]

Archimandrite Bessarion originated from Făgăraş County. In the year 1796 he entered the community of Neamţ Monastery, where he was educated spiritually and tonsured in monasticism. For almost 20 years Monk Bessarion had the task as typographer, meticulously printing cultic books and books for Christian teaching, using the printing presses of the great monastery.

Being found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, in the year 1826, Hieromonk Bessarion went to Mount Athos, together with his disciples Gerontius and Isaiah. There he lived in hermit-like ascesis for 7 years, in fasting and in prayer, day and night, advancing in working the good deeds and enduring not few temptations from the devils. Then, wanting to found on Mount Athos a hermitage for Romanian monks, but not having the necessary material means, Pious Bessarion was urged by God to turn back in his country, together with his disciples. So, by hearing about the recluse places form the North of Dobrogea Province, and about the dwelling places of the hermits from Niculiţel, Taiţa, Celicul Mare, Celicul Mic, and form under the Cocoş Hill, they settled down there.

Besides, on that part of Dobrogea Province existed the oldest hesychastic hearth form our country, dating from the Centuries IV-VI. There were famous Christian cities as Dinogetia, Noviodunum (Isaccea), and Vicina. There were martyrized for Christ Dacian-Roman Christians, during the Centuries III and IV, and in Niculiţel Commune existed one of the oldest monastic centers from The Romanian Countries, before the Centuries IX-XII.

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[298] *From Danube River to the Black Sea*, historical witnesses, Galaţi, 1977, pp. 184-202; Archimandrite Roman Sorescu, *The Monasteries from Dobrogea Province*, Bucharest, 1914; Ştefan Meteş, *Romanian Migrations from Transylvania During the Centuries XIX-XX*, pp. 175, 253-255.

In the year 1833, Hieromonk Besarion founded Cocoş Monastery, having the patronage of the Entrance in the Church of the Mother of the Lord, near to Niculiţel Commune, gathering around him numerous local monks, and also from Moldavia and from Transylvania. He was abbot and spiritual father of that holy place, for 30 years, teaching, advising, and guiding on the salvation path numerous monks, hermit, parishioner priests, and believed from the villages from Dobrogea Province. All of them reckoned him as their spiritual father, they cherished him, and they followed his advice, for he has much power in his words and he lived a chosen life. The local believers reckoned him as saint while he was still alive, for he was healing the ill with his prayers and he gained many souls for the Kingdom of God.

The Cocoş Monastery itself, having a Athonite monastic living style, was to the Romanians from Dobrogea a true spiritual shore. That was because the news about the great abbot attracted pilgrims form all quarters, even from Transylvania. After such an ascesis, in the summer of the year 1862, Pious Archimandrite Bessarion moved to the heavenly dwelling places, leaving behind a numerous community of monks and hundreds of spiritual sons.

HERMIT GHERASIM
The Crazy for Christ
Neamţ Monastery
(Century XIX)

This pious father lived in the community of Neam Monastery during the second half of the Century XIX. After he toiled for many years to fulfill the lowest tasks of the monastery, he started pretending to be crazy, for his love for Christ. He dressed disorderly, he spoke disorderly, he walked barefooted. But he did all those things in order to hide his secret living.

Seeing that, the monastery's abbot sent him to live in a deserted monastic cell from the edge of the forest, situated higher than Vovidenia hermitage. There Monk Gherasim lived alone, more than 20 years, in needs, in humbleness, and in hidden spiritual life. During the day he was reading the *Book of Psalms*, and during the night he went into the forest and there he prayed with tears and with fiery prayers to God. At dawn he turned back to his monastic cell and after a short sleep, he continued his ascesis. He was receiving his food form the community. He was coming daily, with a wooden basket, to the refectory, he took his food for a day, and then he went back.

One day, the abbot noticed that Father Gherasim from Vovidenia didn't come to take his food. The next day happened the same. Then two monks went to see him and they entered through the window, because the door was locked. They found Hermit Gherasim, who pretended to be crazy, dead in the middle of the monastic cell. When he tried to raise him, they noticed that he was holding in his hand a piece of paper. On that paper were written these words:

"Forgive me the sinner, fathers and brothers, for all the offences cause by me to you, and do not stop praying for me, because I couldn't be both pleasant to Christ and not offend the people. Gherasim, the sinner."[299]

PIOUS PACHOMIUS THE HERMIT
Pocrov Hermitage – Neamț
(Century XIX)
A Very Useful Story

Pious Hieroschemamonk Pachomius was a famous hermit living in ascesis in the Pocrov forests, during the second half of the Century XIX. After he firstly had lived in ascesis in Neamț Monastery, he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, and then he withdrew himself on Chriacu Mountain from nearby, according to the local custom, where he lived as hermit to the end of his life.

Father Pachomius was spending the whole week in fasting, in prayer, and in quietude, and on Sundays he came to Pocrov Hermitage for the Holy Liturgy. And the Pious was famous through villages and monasteries for his spiritual ascesis, for he was found worthy of receiving from God the gifts of the wisdom and of banishing away the unclean ghosts from within people. The monks were searching for him for confessing their sins, and the laymen were searching for him for healing their ill ones.

Towards the end of the Century XIX, at Pocrov Hermitage took place a fearsome thing like this:

A man in his forties, from Pipirig Village, got awfully ill because of an unclean ghost. And there was a great pain in that house. The sick man was shouting out, hitting, and running crazily, and his wife and his children were crying and not knowing what to do. Then the people from that village took him in a cart and said:

- Let's take him to Hermit Pachomius at Pocrov, and he will be healed!

At the Hermitage the sick man was locked up in a monastic cell. Then they called Pious Pachomius from the forest to read to the sick man the exorcism of Saint Basil the Great. So, the old man came to the hermitage and decided that the whole community should fast for three days for the sick man, and he was reading, at each midnight, with tears in his eyes, prayers for banishing away the unclean ghosts.

During the first night, when Pious Pachomius came closer to the sick man, he fell in his knees and praying, he said:

- I am tying you, unclean ghost, by the power God Sabaoth and of the entire host of His angels, get out of and get away from this servant of God!

And the evil ghost answered through the mouth of the sick man:

- Don't burn me, you dog, for there's only one like you!

[299] The life of Hermit Gherasim, recounted by Archimandrite Cleopa Ilie.

Then the old man turned back into the forest, and the next night he descended again to the sick man and, praying, he said:

- Fear, run, leave, get away, you unclean devil, form this servant of God!

And the ghost shouted out with a loud voice:

- Don't burn me, you dog, for there's only one like you!

During the third night the Pious prayed again; and the devil, forced by his prayers, told him:

- Do not burn me, dog, for I am not guilty. Barbara and Cassandra sent me here!

So, the old man understood that those two women were witches, so that he said:

- Go back to those who have sent you!

From that moment the evil ghost ran way, and the sick man fell down like dead. But then he came to his senses, he confessed his sins, and the Holy Unction was officiated upon him, he was imparted, and strengthened with a little food, and he went back home. But on the very hour that the evil ghost left the sick man it entered the two witches from Pipirig and made them running through the forests until it killed them. After several days, the villagers found them dead on Hălăuca Mountain and they buried the two women there.

Living Pious Pachomius on Mount Chiriacu until a very old age, and being him pleasant to God, he passed away peacefully and he was buried next to the church from Pocrov Hermitage.

HIEROSCHEMAMONK JONAH
Abbot of Sihla Hermitage – Neamț
(Century XIX)

During the first half of the Century XIX, there was a famous abbot of Sihla Hermitage, called Hieroschemamonk Jonah. This Abbot was very zealous to fasting, to praying, to gentleness, ands to all the other monastic toils. But most of all he was merciful and loving -of strangers.

The old men said that once the Abbot went to hew down firewood in the forest. While they were hewing down a dry beech, they found a bag full of golden coins in that tree's trunk. Then they descended to the hermitage and told everybody about finding that money.

Since that day, Abbot Johan started undertaking many renewals to Sihla Hermitage: repairing the church, new monastic cells, cultic vestments for priests, food, and clothes for the monks. In addition to those, he also enlarged the community, up to 20 fathers and brothers. With that money, Father Jonah also gave many donations, to that he reached to be famous allover Neamț County. Immediately as he had heard that somewhere a new church was being built, he immediately sent a monk there with money and with gifts. Also, hearing about families having many children, or about widows and orphans, he sent to those families: money, clothes, and food - on the same day, by one of his disciples. On occasions, Father Jonah descended from the mountain and

went to Tg. Neamț, for the hermitage's needs. Hearing about that, the people came to see him, some of them for blessing, others for alms, for his name was famous allover that area.

So lived Pious Jonah for the whole his life, being well-pleasant to God, and loving the poor people. Reaching an old age, he peacefully moved into the resting of Christ, and hi body was buried next to the church.

SAINT HIERACH CALINIC
From Cernica Monastery
(1787-1868)[300]

a. His Life

Saint Hierarch Calinic from Cernica was born on 7th of October 1787, in Bucharest, near to Saint Bessarion Church. His baptism name was Constantin.

His parents were called Anthony and Floarea, and they were very pious. The oldest of their children a parishioner priest in his youth, and then he entered the monastic life and become a monk bearing the name Achacius. Also, the mother of Saint Calinic, the Blessed Floarea, after she had raised her children, she withdrew to Pasărea Monastery, receiving the great and angelic countenance, under the name of Schema-Nun Philothea.

The young Constantine, the youngest children, he received, from an early age, a chosen religious education, studying in Bucharest, in the schools functioning, at that time, near the churches.

In the year 1807 he entered the monastic ascesis at Cernica Monastery, under the obedience of the Pious Abbot Archimandrite Timothy. On 12th of November,1808, he was tonsured in monasticism under the name of Calinic. On 3rd of December 1808, he was ordained as hierodeacon. On 13th of February, 1813, he was ordained hieromonk, and on 20th of September 1815 he was ordained as confessor, by himself the Metropolitan of The Romanian Country, Nectarius. In the same time, he also received the task as ecclesiarch of Cernica Monastery. In the summer of the year 1812 he traveled to Moldavia seeking for help, together with his disciple, Hieroschemamonk Poemen, and in the year 1817 he traveled to the Holy Mountain.

On 14th of December, 1818, Pious Calinic was chosen abbot of Cernica Monastery. He was only 30 years old at that time. For his holiness and for the good management of the monastery, on 9th of April 1820 he was ordained

[300] The life, the deeds, and the teaching words of Saint Hierarch Calinic are excerpted from the following sources: Monk Cassian from Cernica, *The History of the Holy Monasteries Cernica and Căldărușani*, Bucharest, 1870ș Archimandrite A. Baldovin, "The History of Cernica Monastery", in *B.O.R.*, no. 12 / 1898; Ibid, *The Life and the Ascesis of D. D. Calinic*, 1893; Cassian the Monk, *The Live and the Ascesis of D. D. Calinic*, 1870; *The Life and the Deeds of Saint Hierarch Calinic*, Bucharest, 1955, second edition.

archimandrite and he led Cernica Monastery for 32 years, forming there a chose monastic community.

The canonization of Saint Hierarch Calinic from Cernica was done on 21st of October 1955, and his celebration is held on 11th of April.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Pious Calinic, while he was still a young monk at Cernica Monastery, he was fasting very much, he was fulfilling regularly his canon and his prayer program, with much zeal, and he was fighting against the sleep. He was sleeping only for three hours at night, but not lied down on the bed, but sitting on a little chair in a corner of his monastic cell, according to the witness of old Hariton, and during the day he was working on the heaviest chores from the monastery, together with the fathers.

2. After his spiritual father, Hieroschemamonk Poemen, left for the Holy Mountain, Pious Calinic set to himself this harsh rule not to eat cooked meals for the whole week, but only bread, and to drink only water, after sunset, and on Saturday and on Sunday to go to refectory, together with the other fathers, and to eat there with restraint.

3. The fathers who knew Saint Calinic confess that his face was always pale because of his much-fasting and his eyes were sunken into his sockets because of his much-vigil and because of so many tears. This was for he achieved from God the gift of the tears at the holy prayer.

4. In the year 1813, many priests and monks from Cernica Monastery died of plague, so that Abbot Timothy was insisting to ordain Hierodeacon Calinic as priest. But Calinic was refusing such a great gift, because of reckoning himself as totally unworthy. But he was very obedient and he gave himself in God's will, so that he received the mystery of the holy priesthood, and he officiated the holy religious services, for the whole his life, with tears and with much piousness.

5. After receiving the priesthood, Saint Calinic started an even harsher ascesis, and he started serving everybody zealously. This is for he was full of the godlike love for everybody, according to that word that says: "If you want everybody to love you, you too must love everybody". If he saw somebody disgusted, he got sad together with that one; he was visiting the sick ones and he comforted then according to his powers, and he was giving alms to the poor people. For that, everybody loved him as a true father and a spiritual parent.

6. Saint Calinic was so humble, so that the more he was honored, the more he humbled himself towards everybody, according to the Lord's word that says: "For who is the smallest among you, that one is the greatest" (Lk. 9: 48).

7. Reaching Saint Calinic confessor of Cernica Monastery, almost all the fathers and the brothers from that community were confessing their sins to his holiness, for all of them were conquered by his ascesis and the sought shelter and comforting for their troubles at him. He was such a skilled confessor that were coming to him, to confess their sins, not only the monks, but also people from outside monastery and even the Metropolitan.

8. Blessed Father Calinic, on each time somebody rebuked him, he spoke nice words; and on him who did injustice to him, he immediately had mercy on him and he helped him with everything he could. But there was nothing in his monastic cell, except a pitcher with water.

9. The fathers said that in his monastic cell the Pious was so serene, so that not even his disciples could hear him what he was doing, namely he was resting himself even when he was praying.

10. According to the witness of several confessors from his time, Pious Calinic was uttering 2000 prayers and he was doing 300 prostrations, in 24 hours, as also he was also fulfilling the canon appointed to any monk when in his monastic cell.

11. The same confessors of Cenirca Monastery witnessed the fact that Saint Calinic, in the years of his youth, he received the gift of the ceaseless *Prayer to Jesus*, which he became through, a house of the Holy Ghost and a chosen vessel.

12. In the spring of the year 1817, Pious Calinic, together with his disciple Ignatius and with another monk, they took counsel one another to totally fast during the Lent until the Holy Easter. So, after they received blessing from the monastery's Abbot Dorotheos, they started that harsh and above-human-power ascesis. But, because of the lack of right-reckoning, satan took all of them in a great temptation. The monk was unable to fast at all. Hieroschemamonk Ignatius faster for a few weeks, but then he lost so much weight that he got ill, and he got healed with big difficulty. And Pious Calinic father totally until the Thursday of the Great Canon[301], when he ate a half of a wafer. But he wanted to accomplish the 40 days of fasting, like our Savior and the saints from yore did, and he got ill with an awful dizziness and weakness of his body, so that he was unconscious until the Sunday of Thomas. Because of that, Abbot Dorotheos was very sad, thinking that Calinic won't escape with his life.

But, with the help from God, Pious Calinic came again to his senses, towards the joy of the abbot and of all the community. Since that moment Father Dorotheos ordered him to keep for the rest of his life the imperial way. Namely to eat daily at refectory what the community ate. So, obeying that command, Father Calinic was eating daily, together with the brothers, at the common table, without having anything to eat in his monastic cell, neither tasting anything without blessing. Despite all of those, from his fasting for forty days, the Pious remained with a constant headache which he was feeling it until his death.

13. In the summer of the same year, Saint Calinic didn't eat bread at all, for forty days, neither cooked or boiled vegetables. Only in the evening, after sunset, he ate a slice of watermelon and fresh fruits, in order to appease the weakness of his body and not to transgress the abbot's commandment.

[301] Namely until the Thursday form the fifth week of the Lent.

14. His disciple, Archimandrite Anastasius Baldovin, confessed that during the whole his life the Pious didn't sleep lied on the bed, but he was only taking a nap on a chair, dressed up and girdled with a wide leather belt. He was like a true sentinel, always ready for fight, constantly taking vigil upon the unseen enemies which wanted to tempt him, either by senses or by thoughts.

15. The same disciple said that nobody could hide something or to tell any lie in front of Saint Calinic, for he was fore-seer, and he was immediately discovering the truth and he was telling the things which followed to happen in the future.

16. The same all-beloved disciple of Saint Calinic said that his teacher was so gentle and humble in heart, so that anyone reckoned that Calinic was an angel and not an earthly man. That's why everybody loved him, honored him, and reckoned him as a true saint, both the monks and the laypeople, and also the bishops and the members of the government.

17. After he was appointed abbot, the Pious strived for, not only with his life but also with chosen spiritual advice, to correct the lazy monks and the ones who were trouble-makers in the monastery. And he brought many on the good path. And the rebels and the disobedient were removed by him form that community, according to the Apostle's commandment, in order they not to harm others too.

18. Saint Calinic reckoned that the obedience is the greatest virtue for monks and it is the foundation of the monastic life. Thus, he was teaching his spiritual sons, that "the life in community, in the holy obedience, it has been founded by Himself our Lord Jesus Christ, by the example of His life on earth".

19. The fathers also said that the Great Abbot didn't permit any gossip in the monastic life. This was because he reckoned it as "the death of the soul". Instead of the much-speaking, he was advising his disciples to ceaselessly practice *The Prayer to Jesus*.

20. The same fathers said that Pious Calinic was fulfilling his call as abbot with a great zeal and with fear of God, knowing that "the hardest and most difficult thing is the craftsmanship of guising the souls on the path to salvation".

21. On occasions he told to his disciples:

- The abbot is the heart of all hearts which search for him and ask him for advice and comforting. He is the path to consummation of all the faithful souls from around him.

22. The Pious often used to fish on the lake from around monastery, and the fish he caught he gave it for the communal table, for the fathers' food. One day, a young monk was cleaning the scales from a small fish, and he started speaking-against and, while hitting that fish with the knife, he was saying: "Take that! Take that! Why didn't you bring your father, your mother, your grandfather, your ancestor, who had bigger scales, so that I wouldn't toil so much!". And the same young monk was answering: "I've come with my father, with my mother, with my grandfather, and with my ancestor, but they have been taken by the fathers from the committee and by father abbot".

These words reached the ears of Pious Abbot Calinic. Then, after he reflected for a while, in order to remove any reason for offence from monastery, he said:

- Since today, I won't ever put fish in my mouth! And rightly so, until the end of his life he never ate fish again, guarding with holiness the promise he made to God. He was eating only vegetables, and even those only once a day, with much restraint.

23. During the rebellion from the year 1821, many inhabitants from Bucharest sook shelter at Cernica Monastery. And the Good Abbot sheltered all of them on Saint Nicholas Island, in the monastic cells, and he moved the monks from there on Saint George Island. During those days of big danger for the country, the inhabitants of the Capital City found many comforting at Saint Calinic. This was for he encouraged everybody, and he rested them, he fed them for free from the monastery's foods.

24. In the spring of the same year, the Turks heard about the multitude of the laypeople sheltered on Cernica's Island, and because they reckoned that there could be some of the rebels hiding, the surrounded the monastery with cannons and they were about to destroy it, and they intended to kill by sword all the people on both islands. Then Saint Calinic gathered the whole people form there and he summoned the monks in the church, and he held an encouragement speech, and they took vigil for the whole night. On the second day he sent a monk with a petition, to the commander of the Turks from the nearby camp. And thus, with the prayers of Saint Calinic, with eth tears of the people, and with the mediation of Saint Nicholas, the Turks were appeased and all the people were delivered from death.

25. Because the food form Cernica Monastery ran out, the monks and the laypeople were menaced by an awful famine. So, Saint Calinic fell to prayer with many tears, in front of the icon of the Mother of the Lord, and in front of the icon of Saint Nicholas, and he asked them for a quick help, and he was immediately listened to. Immediately that the Great Abbot got up from prayer, five carts pulled by oxen entered the monastery's gate, and they were full with dry bread, sent by the commander of the Turks form the nearby military camp.

26. In the same year 1821, another pasha, who have his military camp in Pantelimon, he kidnapped a nun from Pasărea Monastery, keeping her as hostage. But Saint Calinic couldn't accept to see the bride of Christ in the hands of the Turks, he sent a complain to the government, and so he delivered that nun from the hands of the Turks. So, that pasha got very upset, and he decided to attack Cernica Monastery at night, to plunder it, and to kill the Abbot. Saint Calinic heard about the avenger intentions of the Turk, and he took vigil for the whole night, asking God for help. And again, through miracle, he was delivered from danger. This was because even during that night, when pasha was having his coffee before attacking the monastery, one of his servants tried to kill him. But the bullet hit pasha's money-bag, and he escaped with his life. Shaken by that miracle, on the second day pasha sent that money to Cernica Monastery, with which, according to the commandment of the Pious,

there was dug a fountain at the monastery's entrance, known until these days as "The Fountain of the Turk".

27. In addition to the renewal of the spiritual life in his community, the Great Abbot of Cernica took care of the means necessary to the earthly life, according to the example of his forerunners. Thus, he finished the painting of the church from Saint Nicholas's Island, and with the money donated by Hierarch Ioanichie Stratonichias from Bucharest, he built a big church with city walls on Saint George's Island, because there was no longer room for all the monks in one church.

Before Pious Calinic starting the building of the church, appeared in his dream Saint Nicholas, Saint Great Martyr Gheorghe, and Blessed Abot Gheorghe. So, Saint Nicholas told to Pious Calinic: "Get up and build on the small island a church in the name of Saint Martyr Gheorghe". The Great Martyr added these words: "We will send you everything you will need". And Abbot Gheorghe told him: "Don't have any doubt in your heart!".

This vision appeared, in the same time, to Pious Poemen the Confessor, and he entrusted Saint Calinic to start the work. In the year 1832 he started building the new church. In the year 1838 a powerful earthquake crumbled it down, but after four years that church was rebuilt as one can see it even today. Pious Calinic also built, starting with the year 1846, also Pasărea Monastery and other few parishioner churches.

28. Saint Calinic was also a good administrator of Cernica Monastery, and of the other monasteries – Pasărea, Snagov, Căldăruşani, Ciorogârla, and Poiana Mărului - which were under his administration. When he was appointed abbot, Cernica had "only a small chariot, pulled by an ox, driven by a monk in the Bucharest's streets, and anyone wanted threw a bread loaf in that chariot, and then the monk turned back to the monastery and shared that bread among monks. And the clothing of the monks was sponsored by government and by other good Christians".

Or, the Venerable Abbot, in a short time, he restored the economy of the monastery, he organized a big subordinated unit in Bueşti Village – Olt, he built houses and shelters for people and for cattle, he cultivated the land with all kinds of cereals, he planted vineyards and forests, so that everybody wondered about his skillfulness. There the monastery bred cattle herds and sheep flocks, for the food and for the clothing of the monks from monastery.

29. Being summoned and proposed, for several times, to become Metropolitan of The Romanian Country, Saint Calinic, due to his great humbleness, didn't accept that. But an enemy from around him, urged by envy, poisoned him. While the Great Abbot was lying on his death bed, he prayed to God, saying: "Lord, God of my salvation, I didn't think and I didn't want to die poisoned". Then, in the shadow of the night a mysterious voice answered him: "You won't die of poison! Get up and be healthy, for in a short while you will be the Bishop of Rîmnicu-Vâlcea, where you will correct the Church and the clergy which are in regress".

On that very moment the Pious got up and got healthy, and he went to attend the Matins, for it was midnight.

30. While he was abbot, the baker of the monastery came to him and let him know that they run out of flour. And he answered:

- Let's have faith in the Mother of the Lord and in Saint Hierarch Nicholas and we will lack nothing.

Then, entering his monastic cell, he fell to prayer before the icon of his protector, saying: "Saint Hierarch of Christ, Nicholas, the comforter of the poor and the warmly-useful of those who pray to you with faith, please come now too and help to your humble flock and deliver us from famine, as you saved those who were about drowning at sea, for we have no other helper, besides the Mother of the Lord, except you…". And, after Vespers, he asked for the Chapel of the Saint Nicholas to be read in the church.

Thus, Saint Hierarch Nicholas, listening to the prayer of his well-pleasant one, he immediately came to the help of Cernica Monastery. On that very moment to the arrived to the guest house a cart pulled by oxen bringing a load of flour. Two unknown men were sent by their master to bring alms, and they left immediately after they unloaded the flour.

As sign of gratitude, the Abbot gathered the whole community into the church and, after the Compline, they sand the Akathists of Saint Nicholas. Then, after blessing the flour, he ordered to be made bread during that night for comforting the fathers and the brothers.

32. On another day, while he was talking to Father Poemen, who was his confessor, there came to Saint Calinic a man asking for alms. He gave him 50 unit of that day's currency. After an hour a young man came and told to the Abbot: "Father, my parent dies and he tasked me to bring 1000 currency units to the monastery. Here are 500 and the rest I will bring it later on, because I don't have all the sum now". And he left. Then the old confessor asked the Pious:

- What were you thinking at, Father Calinic, when you gave alms to that man?

And the gentle Abbot answered:

- I had wanted to give him 100 currency units, but I didn't have. I gave him only 50 and lo that I have received back 500.

33. In the year 1829, in July, in the morning of a feast-day, Pious Calinic was in his monastic cell on the big island, close to the guest-house. So, looking out of window, he saw a crown of guests who had just arrived, and the poor monks, "the obedient from the guest-house", running all over the place to serve the guests. So, looking at them with heartache, he told to himself:

- Oh, God! Hos will the monastic rank be defamed by living together with the laypeople! And, sighing, he started reading the Hymns of Saint Hierarch Nicholas.

34. The disciples of Saint Calinic said that "his deeds were just like the words he spoke and nobody could find any imperfection to them. This was for,

as he taught so he worked. For also the savior says: "Let your word be so, so, and no, no!" (Mt. 5: 37).

35. The same disciples confessed that Saint Calinic "with much grief accepted his ordination as bishop, on 14th of September 1850, and he accepted it only because he hadn't wanted to spoil the joy of his beloved spiritual son, Barbu Dimitrie Ştirbei – the Ruler of The Romanian Country – and so he obeyed the will of the gathering elected him…".

36. Saint Calinic said, on the moment of parting with his spiritual sons:

- The Monk, wherever he goes and regardless how much well will he find there, it still won't be like there where he firstly became a monk, because his heart isn't at peace.

37. Some other time he said:

- My beloved brothers and sons, we must take care when entering the Holy Church or the Holy Altar, for there is Himself our Lord Jesus Christ present in the Holy Mysteries.

38. His disciple Anastasius said that immediately after Saint Calinic was installed in the chair of the Rîmnicu-Vâlcea Bishopric, he started issuing orders to the chief-priests, that wherever there was a man living in concubinage, they to visit him as ask him why doesn't he marry his female partner?

39. The same disciple said that Saint Hierarch Calinic had great awe for Saint Hierarch Nicholas, whose Akathist he read daily. By the help of God and of the Great Hierarch Nicholas – Saint Calinic's protector -, Saint Calinic rebuilt from foundation up the Episcopal Cathedral from Rîmnicu-Vâlcea, the episcopal houses, and the seminary, between the years 1854-1856, because they were destroyed in the fire from the year 1847. In the same time with the church, the gentle Bishop reopened the famous printing press of the Rîmnic Bishopric, by which he printed all kinds of books for religious service and for souly education, which he was sending for free to priests and believers.

40. Archimandrite Anastasius Baldovin said also about his teacher, the All-Holy Calinic:

- I was wondering about such a supra-natural life, for I was seeing that I was serving a living saint. That's why I often dared as asked him some things about the godlike mysteries and he unveiled me what he thought it was useful to me and as much as my weak and darkened mind could comprise. And when I had advanced with my questions too far, he told me: "It is not now the time for such questions".

41. The same disciple said:

- He had the blessed custom that, after the evening prayers, he kept me next to his holiness for a little while, advising me regarding the faith and my monastic duties and he was unveiling me many secret things.

42. Often, the blessed told me:

- My son, many of the monks and of the laypeople are Christians only by name, while with their life and with their deeds are far from the truth of the Christendom. That's why, to some like those you are not allowed to show what you have seen at me. And to them whom you will know about that they are good Christians, and they believe in the gift and in the power of God, you are allowed to show them and to write them, but only after I will have passed away from this passing world.

43. In the summer of the year 1854, Saint Calinic was travelling to Tîrgu-Jiu, accompanied by his disciple and by several servants, at the request of the believers, and they stopped for the night in one of the villages on their road. And lo that the sons of a wealthy man confessed to the good shepherd that their father had been death for several years, but his body didn't rot in the ground. They unburied him for three times, they officiated requiem for him, with hierarchs and with priests, for three times, but his body was still intact when pulled out of his tomb.

So, they asked Saint Calinic to allow them to unbury their father for the fourth time. And the blessed Calinic, after he will have finished the hierarchal liturgy, to read to their father the prayers for removing the sins, at his tomb. And the good shepherd, having mercy on them, he listened to them. After finishing the Liturgy, they all went to the tomb. The body of the deceased, whole and unharmed, was next to the church's wall. And lo, all-glorious miracle! While Saint Calinic was reading the prayer for untying that man's sins, the unrotten body started to become dust, from feet to head. At the end of the prayer, the whole that body became a small pile of dust mixed with white bones. All the people form there, astonished by that happening, they extolled God.

44. Father Anastasius, the disciple of Saint Calinic said that they tarried for three days at Lainici Hermitage, where was abbot the great confessor and Archimandrite Irodion Ionescu, renowned for his life, all over Oltenia and beyond the Carpathian Mountains. Then, the took mountain paths towards Rîmnicu-Vâlcea, and they stopped for a while in a glade. And after his companions passed forwards, Saint Calinic sat on the ground and started crying.

- Why are you crying, you All-Holy? asked his disciple. Is your stomach hurting you?

- No, my son, he answered. But I haven't believed to see one more abbot being changed at Cernica Monastery. Nicandru, the Abbot from Cernica, has died!...

45. Once, while Saint Calinic was serving the Holy Liturgy in the chapel of Rîmnic Bishopric, there was brought into the church a chained-up woman, awfully tormented by an unclean ghost. At the end of the religious service, the chief-priest of the city, asked the good shepherd of souls for reading a healing prayer. Archimandrite Anastasius prepared the Euchologion for him. After reading the prayer, Saint Calinic blessed the sick woman for three times, in the name of the All-Holy Trinity, and he said:

- In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, get up! On that very moment the sick woman got healed by the grace of God. So, after he got up from the floor, she was kissing, with holy tears, the icons, thanking to her benefactor. Then, Saint Calinic went to his monastic cell and started to cry with many tears.

- Why are you crying, All-Holy? his disciple asked him.

- I am alright, my son, but I see that, for my many sins, God punishes me. Told to everybody, that not for me has God done this miracle of healing the sick woman.

46. The same disciple said about Saint Calinic:

- He was so merciful that, when he no longer had what to give as alms, he took off some of his vestments and gave them away, and he came, crying, and begged me for finding money wherever I could, so that he would have what to give to "the brothers of Christ", for that was what the blessed one called the poor and the helpless.

47. Once, as Saint Calinic has finished the religious service and got out of the church, at a church from Craiova City, the chief priest gave him six golden coins. And in the yard of the Bishopric a woman asked him for alms and he gave her those golden coins.

After three days, the same woman came again to the door of Saint Calinic and asked him for alms. So, calling Father Anastasius, his disciple, Saint Calinic ordered him:

- Give alms to the woman from outside.

- All-Holy Father, the disciple answered, this woman received those six golden coins when we were coming back from the church.

And the gentle shepherd told him, harshly:

- But your piousness, if you ate yesterday, you would not eat today as well? She might have been debtor to somebody and that's why she is asking for more alms. God and give her some alms!

From then on, until the end of the life of Saint Calinic, his disciple didn't dare to make any observation regarding the giving of alms.

48. The disciple said about Saint Calinic also this:

- When he was ordaining priests, not only that didn't accept anything for his work, but he also forbad others from accepting anything. And before the priests had left for their churches, he summoned them before him and he advised them how to behave in society and with their parishioners. Then he gave them money for the trip, books for priesthood, and other books, all for free.

49. During the reigning of Voivode Cuza – said the disciple of Saint Calinic – there happened an unrest in the seminary of the Rîmnic Bishopric, and His Holiness, with his gift and gentleness, "he appeased that uprising. Finding out about that, Metropolitan Nephon and the Minister of the Cults, Scarlat Creţulescu, sent, from Bucharest, a clerk to inquire the events.

- There's no need for you to investigate – Saitn Calinic told to that clerk – for I, as Bishop, I have appeased and satisfied everybody. Tell them who have sent you, that they aren't aware about the situation.

Hearing the message sent by Saint Calinic, the Minister of the Cults got upset, and he went to the Voivode and told him:

- Your Majesty, you must sign the decree of suspension of the Rîmnic Bishop, and to sue him, and if not, please accept my resignation!

- I can accept your resignation, and I won't ever sign the decree to prosecute the Rîmnic Bishop! Told him Voivode Alexadnru Ioan Cuza. The, with a loud voice, he shouted out:

- You, Scarlat, that one, the Rîmnic Bishop, he is the true and holy monk of God and there not other like him in the whole world.

50. Saint Calinic, having the gift of knowing the future, one day he told to his disciple Anastasius:

- You know, my son, that in the year 1866 Cuza will no longer be the Voivode of the country, and there will be made great changes. And you must also know that in the year 1877, there will come in the country the Russian Emperor with his family and with his armies, to cross the Danube River, and to wage war to the Turks. But the Russians will be defeated by Turks. After that, the Russians will ask for the help from the Romanian army and, by the help of God, the Romanian will gain big victories, so that they will be praised and admired an all the continents of the world. After that bloody war, there will be a war by pen, namely with the diplomacy. And after that, there will come such a big war as there have been no other in the existence of the Earth, and blessed will be those who will escape that big war.

51. Often, by going Saint Calinic in canonical visits through his eparchy, he liked Frăsinei Hermitage. That's why he wanted to make there a coenobitic monastery as at Cernica. So, immediately, in the year 1863, he ordered a nice church to be built, and monastic cells from the fathers, and he set there up rules as at Cernica, and a few fathers gathered there, but, because of the harshness of that place, it was not possible to gather there many fathers.

52. After building Frăsinei Monastery, Saint Calinic wanted that in that hermit-like dwelling place never to enter any woman. That's why, before his withdrawal from the chair, he placed a kilometer lower than Frăsinei Monastery, a stone having written on it the followings:

"Calinic, by the mercy of God, Bishop of the Rîmnic of New Severin.

This holy place was built by us, from the foundation, in order to be a coenobitic community of monks. And because through woman it was possible that some scandal could be brought to the monks living there, under a strong bond, it has been forbidden any woman to cross beyond this stone. And they who will dare to do that, let them be under a curse and let all the misfortunes come upon them, as: poverty, weakness, and all sorts of punishments. And again, they who will guard this decision, let them have the blessing of God and of our humbleness, and let there come upon them all kinds of good blessings. Amen. Calinic. Rîmnic, 1867, January 17th".

53. In the summer of the same year, after renewing Frăsinei Monastery, a girl from Muiereasca Village, who was shepherding her cattle close to the monastery's fields, she ran after her cattle, and she mistakenly crossed beyond

the stone placed by Saint Calinic. On that very hour that girl fell ill with epilepsy.

At the prayers of their parents, the pries from that village let Saint Calinic know about that, praying him to forgive her and read her prayers of healing.

- What a sad happening, said the gentle bishop. Let's go and pray for her!

So, he went to Muiereasca village and entered the house of the sick girl. The girl was lying in bed, in harsh suffering.

- Do you know me? Saitn Calinic asked her. And the sick girl nodded that yes, she knew who he was.

Then, he caressed her telling to her:

- You will be healed, yes, yes, you will be healed! I have forgiven you! Let's pray to God so that Him to forgive you too. Then he covered the sick girl with his omophorion, he read to her the prayer for forgiveness, he spread holy water on her forehead, and he told her again:

- Yes, yes, you are going to be healed! And he left.

On the next day the girl stood up, healthy, from her bed. The news about that miracle spread to all quarters, for everybody were honoring the great Bishop Calinic, as a true saints and miracle worker.

54. Archimandrite Anastasius said also about this miracle:

- The son of Craftsman Costache, who built the episcopal cathedral from Rîmnicu-Vîlcea and the Frăsinei Monastery, got ill with epilepsy. That illness was tormenting him awfully. The old craftsman ran to Saint Calinic and asked him, with tears, for prayers for healing for his son.

- Go home, craftsman Costache, His Eminence told to him, and pray to the Mother of the Lord!

Immediately as the father had entered his home, he found his son healthy, praying in front of the icon of the Mother of the Lord.

You too, pray to the Mother of the Lord, the child told them. Can't you see hos the All-Holy Bishop prays? From now on I will no longer be sick!

At that very hour Father Anastasius came to than home bringing the holy relics of Saint Mercurius, for the child to kiss them, according to the commandment of All-Holy Calinic.

55. His disciple also said that starting with the year 1820 and until he passed away from this life, Saint Calinic didn't eat fish, but only vegetables, and even those without oil, once a day. And he ate butter, eggs, cheese, and milk, only a little and only on Saturday, in order to defeat the pride.

56. The same Archimandrite said that starting with the year 1850, when he was elected Bishop, and until the year 1868, when he died, he hadn't changed anything from guarding his monastic duties, but he was even more living in ascesis and in good deeds. Even the clothes he wore as Bishop weren't more luxurious than those he wore when he had been Abbot at Cernica.

57. While he was Bishop of Rîmnic, Saint Calinic sat for the whole day having a book in his hand and reading. In order not to doze out, or to scatter his mind from its work, he used to place a metallic heavy object on the book,

and below, under the book, an empty tin little basin. Immediately as he had started dozing out, Saint Calinic lost his balance, that heavy metallic object fell into that basin, and that woke him up again to prayer and to reading. Thus, the pious was permanently in control of his will and of his body.

58. They also said about him a fact worthy to be known. Because of never eating meat, according to the rule of the monastic life, he ordered to all the fathers from the Bishopric not to eat meat at their turn. One day, as he was sitting on the porch of the episcopal house, he sensed a smell of fried meat. He followed that smell and he reached the monastic cell of a monk. After he knocked on the door, he went in. The monk there was just frying a piece of meat. So, the All-Holy got angry, and started rebuking that monk, telling him:

- You, scavenger, haven't you had enough corpse? Can't you see that you are c0ooking for worms and you are making stench?

Rightly so, Saint Calinic wanted his disciples to be monks also with their deeds, and not only with the words.

59. This all-chosen Bishop and man of God, he was advising his spiritual sons also through epistles, and not only by speeches, and also by his wonderful life. Lo how he was teaching the monks from Cernica Monastery:

- in the place of Christ, I pray you, brothers, walk in good order among the people form outside, in order they, by seeing your good deeds, they to extoll your Heavenly Fathers. And not to defame the good name of God through you.

60. He also said:

- You will be able to defend the honor of God and you honor only by guarding the commandments and your monastic oaths.

61. And regarding the prayer, he was teaching the monks thus:

- Guard, in the first place, the churchly prayers with great heed and with humiliation, and not with scattering of thought or with vain-words, because, if for any vain-word our Lord says that we will be held accountable on the day of the Judgment, how much more will be so those who talk during the holy religious service?

62. The Great Hierarch also said these:

- Guard the communal table, guard yourselves against gathering for foods, brinks, and vain-words, because those lead the monks to awful perdition.

63. Then he added:

- Do not leave the monastery without blessing, neither you go to the capital city or to villages without you being sent for fulfilling a certain task, except in case of big personal need.

64. Saint Calinic said:

- That monk who tarries outside his monastic cell, without being sent to fulfill a certain task, he will get stinky like the staying out of the water. Do not make separate friendships among yourselves; do not have a separate money bag, as Judah did.

65. Then he insistingly kept saying:

- I pray you, guard yourselves against the three weapons of the devil, namely these ones: laziness, forgetfulness, and faithlessness, by which satan enslaves the world to perdition.

66. Saint Calinic also said:

- I pray you, brothers, guard the commandments of God for He to guard you too.

67. At the end, he urged his spiritual sons:

- Brothers, pray to God for me, for Him to forgive all my sins, for Him to guard me against the seen and unseen enemies, to strengthen me in the fight he placed ahead of me, and I to have a Christian end.

68. Then he continued, saying:

- I pray you, my beloved brothers and sons, guard the rules I've established to you according to eth canons of the Holy Fathers, which I have been guarding too, as you have seen me do it, while I have been among you.

69. Saint Calinic also said, in his will:

- Let anybody know that I, ever since I have become a monk in the Holy Cernica Monastery, in the year 1808, November the 12th, during my whole life, I haven't taken care of gathering silver of gold, or unnecessary clothes, I haven't gathered money even for my remembrance, in order I to guard clean the monastic poverty that I have promised it to God.

70. After seventy years of fruitful shepherding of the flock of Christ, namely on 24th of May 1867, Saint Hierarch Calinic withdrew himself again to Cernica Monastery, where he had become a monk in the first place, and where he wanted to pass away. On the second day from the Ascent of our Lord, he came to the church, he attended the Holy Liturgy, and at the end he shared anaphora to the fathers, kissing goodbye all of them. Then he went to his monastic cell, which he had prepared it especially for the last period of his life, and after that he passed away, as he was totally weak because of being old and because of much fasting.

71. Metropolitan Nephon told to Atanasius, the disciple of Saint Calinic:

- I know that you, the Baldovin Brothers, you have been serving, fearing God, your Bishop. I pray you, when you see that he is ill, let me know about that, so that I to confess my sins to him, for I have many words to tell him as he still is in this life and I to ask him for forgiveness. After the Metropolitan entered and confessed to Saint Calinic, the Metropolitan came out so glad and with an enlightened face, as he had never had before during his whole life.

72. After Metropolitan Nephon had left, Saint Calinic, who was bedridden, told to his beloved disciple, Anastasius:

- My son, Nephon confessed to me everything and I believe that there is a hope for his salvation. I am letting you know that, after seven years from my death, when he will unbury me, the Metropolitan will enter his tomb.

This prophecy had been fulfilled exactly.

73. On the Good Thursday, in the year 1868, towards the end of March, Saint Calinic called to his monastic cell seven priests and they officiated the Holy Unction. After the closing prayer, the All-Holy told them:

- Fathers, pray for me, for we might part with one another these days!

74. At the request of Saint Calinic, on each evening, his beloved disciple, Pious Anastasius was coming to his monastic cell, and he read the whole prayer program for him, because Saint Calinic was by then weak and he was unable to do it himself. After finishing the prayers, Saint Calinic was dialoguing much with Father Anastasius and with the other close fathers, giving them all kinds of useful-to-the soul advice.

75. Father Anastasius said that on one of those evenings of -prayer and of vigil, Saint Calinic told to him:

- Remember what I told you in the year 1852 at Craiova, and since then and until now, that you, the Baldovin Brothers and Orest will close my eyes and you will take me to my grave. Take care to dress me up, after I will have died, with the vestments which I have told you about that they have been sent to me by Brâncoveanu Nun from Moldavia.

76. Father Anasstasius also said that on one evening, his All-Holiness and I dialogued about several teachings and I knew that the Holy Ghost was consummately with him, so I told him:

- All-Holy Father, I know that, a little or more, as I have been serving you, I have been serving you with faith and with love. I don't' ask for that anything else but you to pray before God so that God to forgive my sins committed by me in this world". Then His Holiness started crying bitterly, so that he made me crying too. After he got appeased, he started telling me:

- My son, I have admitted you to Cernica Monastery. I have tonsured you in monasticism, and you have been following me. I know that you haven't guarded your duties and your oaths for monasticism, but I know that you strive for guarding those and I am promising you, that if I find grace before God, I will pray for you and for all those of mine.

77. Wanting Saint Calinic to listen to the last Holy Liturgy on earth, and to rejoice himself of the feast of the Resurrection of the lord, on the Easter Day a priest officiated the Holy Liturgy in the chape of the monastic cells where he was living, and he was imparted, for the last time, with the All-Clean Mysteries. It was 7th of April 1868.

78. On the Enlightened Thursday, namely on 11th of April, there came to an end the 14 days prophesized by Saint Calinic. A few days earlier the Abbot of the monastery, Archimandrite Stephen came to see him, "whom he loved very much and whom he had entrusted his will for his burial, a little earlier. Then, Saint Calinic taught him also a few spiritual things, both of them dialoguing for hours.

79. During the night of 10th towards 11th of April Father Anastasius came to Saint Calinic and read the Matins to him. After the finishing prayers, they dialogued about salvation and about other useful things. At dawn, Father Anastasius withdrew to his monastic cell.

At 5 in hours in the morning, Saint Calinic called his disciple Gherman top dress him up in burial shirt and clothes. He had given away, as alms, all the other vestments he had. He stood up by himself, he washed his face, he

combed his hat, and he blessed all the ones who were present there. He told to his disciples that "some big people came into the house and they wanted to take him with themselves".

As he stood, he asked for a cross. Then, holding that cross in his hand, he bowed before it, he kissed it, and he said:

- Holy Cross, help me!

And to his disciples he told:

- May us see each other in the happiness from the other world.

Then he leaned his head on the chest of Gherman, he sighed deeply, and he yielded his ghost in the hand of the Lord.

80. At the burial of Saint Calinic, who took place on Saturday, on 13th of April, there came Metropolitan Nephon with four bishops, several abbots, and tens of thousands of believers, "so that both islands were overcrowded". All people present there were striving to reach close enough to kiss his hands. His body was dressed up in hierarchal vestments, as he ordered, and he was placed on his chair, with his staff and with the Gospel placed over his hands.

The burial service was done in the big church from the Island of saint Nicholas. Then four priests carried him with their hands, accompanied by hierarchs, priests, and deacons, and they buried him sitting on his chair, on the north side of the porch of Saitn Gheorghe Church founded by him.

81. After the burial of Saint Calinic "a commission came from the government in order to investigate his personal wealth and they found an insignificant sum of money, but many signed receipts form all the places where he sent alms, both form Romania and from abroad: from Orient, Jerusalem, Stefagora, and from many other placed from Turkey, papers which they seized and took to the ministry".

82. About Saint Calinic, his disciple Pious Anastasius Baldovin said:

- This Holy Bishop and Hierarch of our Orthodox Church has committed many great and useful deeds for this country and for the Romanian Church.

83. He also said about Saint Calinic that, during his life, he built seven big churches and three chapels and he raised thousands of spiritual sons.

84. The last words of the disciple form a solemn confession towards believers:

- I declare, upon my conscience, as archimandrite and confessor as I the sinner am, and in the name of the true truth, that this Holy Bishop Calinic, as he exited the womb of his mother, likewise he entered the womb of the earth"[302].

85. *Lamentation of the Humbel Calinic, Hieromonk and Abbot of Cernica Monastery*[303]:

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[302] These sayings have been taken from *The Histories of the Holy Cernica and Căldăruşani Mpnasteries*, written by Casian of Cernica, Bucharest, 1870, and from "The Life and the Monastic Ascesis of the All-Pious Bishop of Rîmnic and New Severin, D. D. Calinic", wrote by Archimandrite Anastasius Baldovin, in *The Romanian Orthodox Church*, 1898, pp. 1015-1034, and from *The Life and the deeds of Saint Hierarch Calinic from Cernica*, Bucharest, 1955.

[303] Excerpted from *The History of Cernica Monastery*, pp. 1043-1044.

I know that my beginning has an end.
But I am living as without having an end
My mind having a high thinking
And my life is getting shorter.
Day and night, while thinking at the vain-things
I have been coming closer to my death.
The closer I see my death getting to me
The more I try to forget about it:
Because, if it is impossible to escape my death with the work
I am striving to get rid of it by thought
Oh, and woe, hos callous I have become!
On each day I accompany my brothers to their tombs
I got not humble at all.
Neither my heart sighs
Neither do I bow my eyes to the ground
To look into the tomb
To see my adornment shining among bones
Full of stench and eaten by worms!

Ah, how my tomb shouts out at me
Saying: here you too will dwell tomorrow.
Deviate towards me at least for today
By getting your mind out of the world.
Least your death will come upon you unannouncedly
For, as many people as loved the world
They were sent naked in their tombs,
And the death
Laughed at and mocked the things they have gathered here.
And they haven't enriched themselves into God
But they inherited an eternal torment.

In the eternal tartar.
Woe, woe to my wickedness.
Why can't I come to my senses,
So that I could cry incessantly.
Come, my wicked soul
We to fall down to God with crying,
Preying the All-Holy Virgin
My Kind warranter,
To make Her Son God Jesus Christ
Merciful, so that Him to deliver me form the eternal fire.
For I knew that I was mistaking
All you saints pray for me
Because I by myself deprived myself of your good.

At least from now one, I to live in repentance.
And I to pass away into faith
So that I to gain the eternal resting. Amen.
Calinic, Abbot of Cernica Monastery, 1822, 1st of August.

TEACHING WORD
Of Saint Hierarch Calinic, uttered towards the Whole Community, in September 1850, When He Left After He Was Appointed Bishop of Rîmnicu-Vîlcea

Brothers and Fathers,

God has deigned that today we are bodily parting one with another, but I think that we will be together in ghost until the end of this temporary life, for I prayed so to God, for where my youth had got melted, there too this life to come to its end, and I believe that will be true. This is for nothing is sweeter than the raising provided by the parental home, as more often it happened to us the monks, and they who tasted this cup will more strongly understand my word.

This is for, wherever the monk goes and regardless how nice the things are there, it still won't be so good as where he firstly became a monk; because, elsewhere, his heart won't be at peace. I too, as a monk, I have been living on these islands for 43 years. Think at how big my sadness is and what grief is engulfing me, which you can see it by yourselves on my face, for I've started crying, I cannot tell you everything I have in my heart, but only these few teachings, and "I pray you to observe them, as coming from a spiritual father of yours, and listen, by beloved ones, attentively.

Brothers and Fathers,

Our Lord Jesus Christ told to the Jews: "My House will be called a prayer house in all languages, but you have made of it a thieves cave" (Mt. 21: 12). In order us not to suffer or to hear such words, my beloved brothers and sons, we must take a great care when entering the Holy Church or the Holy Altar, for there is Himself our Lord Jesus Christ present in the Holy Mysteries.

Nobody is forgiven, except for the great need, for entering the Holy Altar. And when we are forced, let's enter with great shyness and fear, as Prophet David says: "Serve the Lord with fear…" (Ps. 2: 11), and with teaching, lest because of nescience us to mistake and so to make our Lord angry and "we to perish from the right path". Therefore, we must honor the holy things with a great awe. When we need to enter, let's make 3 bowings down before the door, and let's uncover our head before entering. Then let's make three more bowings down when arrived inside. The ones who have been ordained they will kiss the

Holy Table, but the simple monks won't touch it. And, as long as we are inside the altar, let's stay there with great fear and with awe, as before Christ. Ane when the time comes for remembrance at Proskomide, let's do the remembrance also while having our heads uncovered, for, as Apostle Paul says: "because the man praying or prophesizing while having his head covered, he ashamed his head Christ". But if somebody was very sick or he was very cold, he could cover his head, for God know our hearts, and he knows our thought which He will reward. We must do so.

And at the time of the Holy Liturgy nobody is allowed to enter the Holy Altar, except the priests, the deacons, and the serving chaplains, and those too must walk in there with awe and with peace. And all the others, we owe to stay within the Holy Church with awe and with fear; neither causing disorder to talking to one another, or looking with our eyes at a side or at another; neither we are allowed to exit until the end of the religious service, lest we will fall under the curse of the Holy Synods of the Holy Fathers, which condemn those who run away before the final prayers. And having a certain task of a helplessness, let them go to the priest and kiss his hand and take anaphora and only then to leave. But lets each of us examine himself lest that would be a devilish temptation, of laziness, or inattention, lest they will fall under the prophet's curse, that says: "*Curse is everyone who does the thing of God with laziness and inattentively*".

Therefore, brothers, let's stay in the House of God, for it is a Prayer House, and it isn't a tent for circus. Let's honor the holy things in order us too to be honored by God; and let's not make Him angry, as the sons of Aaron did, so that we to perish. Thes things I am advising you and I am teaching you, my beloved ones, so that all of us to be saved, with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is for, despite we will be at distance with our bodies, but we will be unseparated in ghost, praying one for another and helping one another, according to that word that says: "for brother helping brother, they will become as an undefeated stronghold".

So, you too, my sons, when uttering your prayers established by your confessor, remember me too, your parent, who has been taking care of each of you, since the day I have received you into the monastery. This is for I have been managing each of you according to your helplessness and I have been taking care of you until today. And now I am giving you in the hand of Saint Hierarch Nicholas, the comforter of my helplessness, so that He will take care of your salvation. And after Him, I am entrusting you to the taking care of the pious and my loving son, sir Nicandru, whom I received into monastery when he had been a child, and who is advanced and worthy of advising souls towards salvation.

Then, turning himself towards the Pious Abbot, Father Nicandru, he started with sweet and grieving words, to tell him these:

My Beloved Son Nicandru

God deigned that I leave you in my place, so you to shepherd this little flock, which I have been taking care of for 32 years, and many troubles and toils I have suffered for this little dwelling place, only and only in order to see it adorned with a gathering of disciples of Christ. And lo, son, I am entrusting to you, 354 brothers, and I pray you to take care of everybody's salvation, to that your piousness too to be rewarded as a true shepherd.

And with the gift of God, may all of us be saved, and after a while we will see each other again.

Then he sat in the pew, having his eyes full of tears, while all the fathers came and kissed his hand, crying for him. And the singers were singing parting songs. And after the final prayers all of them exited the church, accompanied by the sound of the bells, for every mortal to shed tears, even having a stone heart.

And the community accompanied Saint Hierarch Calinic up to a certain distance, where they took good bye, and the Hierarch and a few fathers – whome he took with him in order to help him with his tasks at the Bishopric – they got in the chariot and then they left.

EPISTLE no. 88
Of Saint Hierarch Calinic from Rîmnicu-Vîlcea
Addressed to the Community of Cernica Monastery[304]

Brothers and Fathers,

I am coming with my ghost to visit you, for, despite I have got far from you with my body, but with my ghost I am together with you. This is for I wish your souly progress, and I wan you to have a good living, in order you to progress in the spiritual deeds: in love, in union, in obedience and submission to your leader, and to all the brothers living into Christ, as we have promised in front of the Holy Altar, when humbly receiving the holy monasticism.

On behalf of Christ, I pray you to walk in good order among the people from outside monastery, in order they to see your good deeds and so they to extoll our Heavenly Fathers. And let not the name of God to be defamed through you. And lo how will you be able to guard the honor of God and of yours, by keeping the commandments and the monastic promises:

(This is an intentionally left blank space, for we hadn't had at our disposal the pages 444-445 of the source text' we continued directly with the page 446 from the source text; if somebody among the reader has and wants to

[304] Excerpted from "The History of Cernica Monastery", in *B. O. R.*, year XII (1898), by Archimandrite Athanasius Baldovin, pp. 1044-1045.

send us the missing pages, please let him we will gladly add the translation of those pages to the present targe text[305])

… for on me, who I am so poor, they to give me to the usual burial, and then I pray them who remember about their death, to drag my wicked body to any poor church, and there, to bury my body next to other bodies. And if the will of the rulers ordered I to be buried according to the custom, then I pray the loving-of Christ undertakers to, being in the eparchy, they to bury me next to the newly built Episcopal Cathedral. And if my passing away will be outside the eparchy, may them bury me in the Holy Cernica Monastery, next to the newly built church, where I have become a monk, and where I have been toiling much since my youth to my old age.

So, if one wants to do remembrance, without money, in his prayers, for my wicked soul, for God, one like that will surely be remembered in the Kingdom of Heavens. And he who needs payment in order to do remembrance, I pray him not to do my remembrance, because I was so poor and I left nothing for my remembrance. And the merciful God may me merciful to everybody and to me the sinner, forever. Amen.

Year 1860, written for you by the Humble Hierarch
CALINIC, Bishop of Rîmnic of New Severin

CONFESSOR IOSAPHAT APOSTOLIU
Neamț Monastery
(1764-1883)[306]

This Pious Father was one of the most famous confessors of Neamț Monastery during the Century XIX.

Born in Călineşti-Botoşani Commune to very-loving-of Christ parents, he entered the monastic ascesis in the year 1785. At that time, the spiritual life at Neamț Monastery, under the leadership of Great Abbot Paisius, it reached its peak of flourishment. Being entrusted to some advanced fathers, the young John was educated, he learnt the rules of the church, and he tasted the sweetness of the prayer and of the spiritual ascesis.

After he had become a monk, the Great Abbot Paisius passed away (1794), so that the young monk was crossing through all the monastic tasks, until the beginning of the Century XIX: Then, after the fathers had seen his thoughtfulness and wisdom, they ordained him priest and made him confessor. And Hieroschemamonk Iosaphat was counted among the group of the 24

[305] (E. l. t.'s n.; goleam@yahoo.com)
[306] States Archives – Neamț Branch, Neamț Monastery Fund, on the years 1800-1883.

confessors appointed to receiving the confession of sins, of the community, and to educating new beginners. Later on, After the old confessors had passed away, Pious Iosaphat became the chief-confessor of Neamț Monastery.

About this worthy-of-being-praised father, the monastery's tradition tells us that he was balanced in everything, and he had the right-reckoning. He was neither harsh nor forgiving everything; he neither kept himself upset with somebody, nor was him too gentle on everybody; neither was him speaking much, nor he was speaking vainly. But he was speaking a little, in understandable words, and according to the wound of each one. And his parental words, as some spiritual arrows, they were alleviating the pain, they were appeasing the temptation, the were banishing away the passions, and they were wounding the heart with the love of Christ, for he was strengthened by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Confessor Iosaphat lived himself an ascetic life of a great hermit and of one who was praying for the people. He ate once a day, after sunset. His monastic cell was a secret church. There he was praying with unknown tears and he was doing many prostrations each night. He never missed from the church, and after the religious service he was visiting the ill fathers form the infirmary and from their monastic cells, and he was advising the brothers and he was comforting, with a great love, the believers. He was receiving the confession of everybody, he was listening to them, he was blessing them, and he was understanding, by the gift of God, the condition of each one.

For 70 years Pious Iosaphat was the chief-confessor of the great monastery. To him were coming the abbots, the bishops, the schemamonks, the monks, the laypeople, and all the hermits from Neamț forests. He had raised and tonsured in monasticism more than 500 spiritual sons, among which some of them reached to be hermits, abbots, and chosen hierarchs.

After such an ascesis, Pious Iosaphat the Confessor yielded his soul in the hand of Christ, on 4th of May 1883, and he was mourned by the entire community of the monastery.

About him, one of his disciples wrote in the *Register of the Buried* of the cemetery of Neamț Monastery: "Iosaphat Apostoliu the Confessor, Hieroschemamonk, born in Călimănești Commune, in the year 1764, on 1st of January, and dead in the year 1883, on 4th of May, a holy man, founder, who lived 119 years. He was grandfather to Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu from Neamț Monastery"[307].

[307] Hierarch Narcis Crețulescu, *The Library of Neamț Monastery*, manuscript no. 139, 1901, p. 37.

Pious Fathers From the First Half of Century XX

HIEROSCHEMAMONK VASIAN PANAITE
Abbot of Pocrov Hermitage – Neamţ
(1821-1903)

Pious Hieroschemamonk Vasian was, for 52 years, a great abbot and confessor of Pocrov Hermitage. He was born in Filioara Village – Neamţ, in the year 1821, to some poor but believer parents. Knowing the monasteries from around that area, he had had growing, from a young age, the love for Christ in his heart.

In the year 1840, he entered the monastic ascesis at Neamţ Monastery. After two years, he had been tonsured in monasticism under the name Vasian, and since the year 1843 he became disciple of the great Abbot Neonil, together with Monks Neophyte Eliade and Theophanous Cristea. After the Abbot dies in the autumn of the year 1853, Father Vasian was ordained priest and appointed abbot of Pocrov Hermitage. In that renown hermitage Hieromonk Vasian lived in ascesis, as Abbot, confessor, serving priest, and adviser, for everybody, for 50 years.

After the church and the monastic cells were renewed, there gathered around him a community of 20 monks and schemamonks, among the most loving of quietude and ascesis. Together with his disciples, Abbot Vasian worked zealously for totally fulfilling the rules established by Bishop of Roman, Pachomius, who lest those rules by his will to his foundation. Namely, the guarding, with holiness, of the religious services, the monks living in a consumamte community life, eating fasting-food five days in a week, and on Saturdays and of Sundays being allowed to eat chess and milk.

For the needs of the hermitage, Father Vasian planted an apple-tree orchard, he dug up a pond for fish, and he formed a famous apiary counting 200 beehives. And for accommodating the worshippers visiting the monastery, he built a guest-house where he sheltered and fed everybody, for free. Father Vasian took the same care for the few hermits who were living in ascesis, in the forests from around Pocrov, providing them with food and other necessary means.

The spiritual life of prayer and of quietude from that Hermitage, as also the gentleness and the kindness of Abbot Vasian, they quickly became known everywhere. Monks and abbots from monasteries, bishops and hermits, priests and believer laypeople, peasants and townspeople, simple people and literates, they all found in Father Vasian from Pocrov a true servant of Christ, a wise adviser, and a skilled spiritual father. For 50 years, this humble abbot had stood, tirelessly, day and night, before the Lord and before the people, praying for all people, advising, taking confessions, and feeding them with his own hands.

In the summer of the year 1903, Pious Vasian became Schemamonk, and in the autumn he went to Christ for taking the reward for his toils[308].

HIEROSCHEMAMONK SAVA POPESCU
Stănişoara Monastery – Argeş
(1830-1904)[309]

This Pious Father was a chosen vessel of our monasticism, surpassing many with his ascesis, with his silence, with his quietude, and with his work of the mind.

Father Sava was the eldest sone of Priest Nicolae Popescu from Bucşeneşti Village – Argeş, Loviştea Area. His father sent him to study at the Seminary from Rîmnicu-Vâlcea, thinking that he would become a priest and inherit his parish. But young Stephen, being called by God to monastic ascesis, after two years he left the seminary and went to Stănişoara Monastery. In the Century XIX, that monastery was the most famous hermitage from The Romanian Country. An isolated place, without access roads, with Athonite living-rules, where no women were allowed to enter. For the quietude and for the rules of that monastery there were not onoly a few loving-of Christ monks living there in ascesis.

Young Stephen too entered that hermitage, arouidn the year 1850. After three years of living in obedience and of fulfilling his tasks, he became a monk, receiving the name of Saitn Sava the Sanctified. Later on, as the Abbot saw his good settlement in zeal for the holy things, he ordained him deacon and priest in the community of Stănişoara Monastery. He was tarrying, day and night, within church, and he was serving with piousness the holy religious services, he was singing beautifully, he spoke only a little to the people, while he was speaking permanently to God. He never let anyone enter his moanstic cell. There, as in a secret church, he was praying ceaselessly, he was shedding tears unknown to anybody, he was adding many prostrations and vigils of all night and he was beign imparted with the joys of the Holy Ghost.

Hearing about the living of his son, Priest Nicolae Popescu left himself for monastery and became a monk under the name of Hieromonk Nephon. Then his younger son too, he left the seminary and became a monk at Stănişoara Monastery as well, under the name Athanasius. There lived together in ascesis, Father Nephon and his sons Sava and Athanasius, for over 30 years, extolling God and praying for people.

At the request of Saint Hierarch Calinic, Hieroschemamonk Sava went, in the year 1863, to help organizing the Frăsinei Monastery. As spiritual father of

[308] Archimandrite V. Vasilache, "Vasian from Pocrov", in *Tribute Dedicated to Patriarch Nicodemus*, Bucharest, 1946, pp. 52-64.
[309] According to the witnesses of his disciple, Archimandrite Grigorie Urițescu, the Abbot of Trivale Hermitage – Pitești.

that hermitage, for four years, he had gathered around himself up to 20 disciples, he had founded a community life, he set in place religious services according to the role-model of Mount Athos, and then he went back to the monastery where he firstly became a monk. After a few years, Hieroschemamonk Sava was appointed abbot of Turnu Monastery, which he was advising with the same gentleness and wisdom for almost four years. Then he left another abbot in his place and he again withdrew himself, to the blessed quietude from Stănișoara Monastery.

In the year 1890, Hieroschemamonk Nephon moved to the eternal life, aged 90, and in the year 1895 Pious Sava was appointed abbot to the monastery where he had become a monk in the first place. But because he was humble and loving-of-quietude, after a short while he renounced to that honor, choosing for himself the silence and the ceaseless prayer, but the whole community loved him for his gentleness and for his ascesis, and they had him as their confessor. He was also searched for by the laypeople, for advice and for comforting.

Reaching an old age, Father Sava spent his final years in fasting and in prayer, being cared by his brother, Athanasius. And when he had felt his end drawing near, he received the Holy Mysteries, and then he called the monastery's Abbot and told him:

- Father Abbot, my end is near. Forgive me the sinner, for everything I have done wrong to you and bless me, for today I ought to stay to judgment in front of Christ! Do not forget me at the holy prayers.

Then, kissing goodbye one another, and crying on the shoulders of one another, he told to his brother:

- Father Athanasius, I am going to go to the Lord for being held accountable for my deeds. Remember me, ceaselessly, in the church, and bury my body next to our father, so that we to be together also beyond, as we have been on earth. Lit up the candle in the candlestick and go to your monastic cell and pray for me!

After a few moments, when Schemamonk Athanasius came back, he found Pious Sava passed away, with the candle next to him. Then, after they officiated the burial service according to the rule, they buried him near to the church's altar, next to Hieromonk Nephon.

PIOUS DOMETIE THE MONK
Neamț Monastery
(† 1905)

The fathers from the community of Neamț Monastery say that there was living in ascesis, during the second half of the Century XIX, a very pious and unnoticed monk called Dometie. He had been having his task as shepherd of monastery's cattle for 60 years, carrying the food waste from the kitchen, and

ceaselessly saying *The Prayer to Jesus*, in full silence, and with spiritual content. In his monastic cell had but his clothes, *The Book of Hours*, and *The Book of Psalms*. And because he hearing was weak, the fathers called him "the Deaf Dometie from cattle", so that they differentiated him from others bearing the same name Dometie.

In the year 1905, in autumn, the ecclesiarch of the monastery told to everybody:

- Fathers, Deaf Doemtie has died. I found him in his monastic cell, having his *Book of Psalms* next to him, and I have laid him on the church's porch. Who among you want to read the psalms near to Father Dometius, as it is the custom to the monks?

- I am going to read to him from *The Book of Psalms*! answered Hieromonk Ioanichie Moroi. A midnight, while the monks were coming to attend the Matins, the whole church was full of good fragrance.

- Where this good fragrance is coming from? they were asking Hieromonk Ioanichie.

- It has been coming out of the coffing of Father Dometie! he answered them.

Then the monks understood that God had extolled Father Dometie as a saint, and they started bowing down in front of his coffing, saying:

- Pious Father Doemtie, pray to God for us!

Then, they brought their *Books of Psalms*, and they prayed for the entire night for the resting of Dometie's soul. And some many of them gathered there that there was not enough room even in the nave or on the porch. That's why, some of them were reading the psalms while sitting around the church.

During the burial service, the body of Monk Dometie spread around, again, a good fragrance. Then Hierarch Narcis Creţulescu, the abbot of the monastery, uttered these words:

- Do you see, fathers, how God extolls him who obeys without speaking-agaisnt? Do you see the one who prays ceaselessly, patiently, and who doesn't search for reward from people, but only from Jesus Christ? The poor Father Doemtius now has become rich! Father Dometie, who has bene noticed by nobody, now he is in heavens praying for all of us. This is for so extolls God the humble and obedient monks!

SCHEMAMONK ATHANASIUS POPESCU
Stănişoara Monastery – Argeş
(† 1907)

Schemamonk Athanasius was the youngest son of priest Nicolae Popescu, from Bucşeneşti Commune – Argeş, brother to Hieroschemamonk Sava from Stînioşara Monastery. His father, after sending him to study at Rîmnicu-Vîlcea Seminary, he became a monk at Stînioşara Monastery, under

the name of Nephon and he was living there, in ascesis, together with his elder son.

But neither the youngest child wanted to remain within world. After he had studied 4 primary grades at the seminary, and after he had learnt well the churchly music, he too went to Stînioşara Monastery in order to sing, for his whole life, to Christ. There he surpassed everybody with the beauty of his singing, with the zeal for the holy things, and with his obedience. His father had told him that, in the first place, he should become a priest, but he chose to become a monk. His father approved that. The abbot, seeing his ascesis, he tonsured him in the monastic countenance, under the name Athanasius. And it was a wonderful thing seeing the father and his two sons together, serving God, day and night, but Father Athanasius was surpassing everyone with his zeal for prayer, with his humbleness, and with his silence.

In the monastery he was loved by everybody, especially for two spiritual gifts he had. He was reading very beautifully, while in the pew, without making any mistake, and he sang angelically to that he moved the hearts of everybody. He was also a good knower of the typicon, a task that he had for his entire life. Father Athanasius he had been singing and reading for fifty years, in the fear of God, without ever leaving the monastery. And for the humbleness of his heart, he achieved from Christ the gift of the ceaseless prayer and the comforting of the Holy Ghost.

Lo what Archimandrite Grigorie Urițescu said about him:

- I met Father Athanasius and I lived in the same Stînioşara Monastery where he lived too, around the years 1900-1905. He was a very honest man. He never mingled with other people's businesses. He never left the monastery for going to villages of cities. He always observed the hours for religious services and, together with his brother Sava, they were the first to arrive to the church. His place was on the left pew. He read the canons and he sang, and he didn't make any mistake when reading, neither he told anything to one who mistook. When fulfilling certain works tasked to him, he never opened a dialogue with anybody. He answered only if he had been asked something. And he never allowed anyone to enter his monastic cell, that was next to that of his brother.

In the autumn of the year 1907, Pious Schemamonk Athanasius went to Christ, and his body was buried next to those of his father and of his brother.

Lord, rest Your pious Nephon, Sava, and Athanasius, in peace!

PIOUS ARCHIMANDRITE IRODION IONESCU
The Confessor of Saint Calinic
Lainici Hermitage – Gorj
(† 1900)[310]

This Pious Father was one of the great abbots of the Romanian monasticism, who shone in the Oltenia's monasteries during the second half of the Century XIX.

He originated from Vîlcea Country. Entering the monastic ascesis at Cernica Monastery, at a young age, in a short time he learnt well the craftsmanship of the spiritual fight, so that surpassed many with his prayer, with his humbleness, and with his obedience. Then he received the great and angelic monastic countenance under the name Irodion.

Saint Hierarch Calinic, while he was shepherding the Rîmnic Eparchy, knowing the way of living of Pious Schemamonk Irodion, in the summer of the year 1853 ordained him deacon and then priest and he appointed him Abbot to the Lainici Hermitage from Jiului Valley. Then he made him archimandrite and had him as his adviser and confessor. And he loved him so much and he was so conquered by the holiness of his life, that sometimes paid him visits at the hermitage, calling him "the Morning Star from Lainici!". Thsi name has been preserved by the people's tradition until these days. From Pious Irodion, Saint Calinic crossed over the mountains to Rîmnicu-Vîlcea, in the summer of the year 1854, when God unveiled him the death of Archimandrite Nicandru, the Abbot of Cernica Monastery[311].

For his much humbleness, Archimandrite Irodion was found, by Christ, worthy of the gift of the all-holy prayer and of banishing away the unclean ghosts. That's why, many ill people, some of them with palsy, from the villages from Oltenia and from Transylvania, they ran at him and they were healed, so that his name became known everywhere. This great Abbot was also found worthy of the gift of fore-seeing. He told to many people their secret thoughts and he heralded the future things.

Once, a woman brought him – according to the custom – a jug with milk from her goat. But the Pious told her:

- I don't accept the milk because it is not from your goat!

- But it is my goat, father! – the woman answered him.

- But didn't you give it, yesterday, to the devil? So, how could I accept the milk if it is no longer your goat? So, the woman saw herself exposed, and she confessed her sin and she took Blaesing, and since that day she never cursed.

So lived Pious Archimandrite Irodion, always burning of his love for Christ, as a torch and as a candlestick, comforting, healing, and spiritually

[310] The data has been gathered from the Abbots of the Lainici Hermitage – Protos Visarion Toia and Calinic Garaman, as also from the local tradition.

[311] ***, *The Life of Saint Hierarch Calinic from Cernica Monastery*, the Edition of the Biblical Institute, Bucharest, 1955.

benefitting both laymen and monks. He was a famous confessor and abbot at Lainici Hermitage for over 35 years, and he gathered there, around him, about 30 disciples.

When he was 90 years old, he felt his end drawing near, so that he summoned to himself all the monks from the hermitage and he gave them his final blessing, telling them:

- My sons, I want you to know that, a short time after my leaving, this hermitage will remain, for many years, deserted. But you, bury my body near to altar, and do not forget about your monastic promises which you have bestowed to Christ! Then he moved to the eternal life in the summer of the year 1900, in order to take the reward for his toils.

In the autumn of the year 1916, the prediction issued by Pious Irodion came to fulfilment. There were heavy battles on Jiu Valley, and the Lainici Hermitage remained deserted. The monastic cells were burnt, the cultic objects were pillaged, and the church was transformed in a stable for horses. Only in the year 1929 the Lainici Hermitage was made functional again, by the care of protosyncellus Visarion Toia.

The new abbot, hearing about the life and the deeds of Pious Irodion Ionescu, he unburied his remnants in one autumn and - oh! glorious wonder! – he found his body whole and unharmed as of a true saint! So, after receiving command from the Bishop of Rîmnic, he buried his remnants again in his tomb, where it has been up to these days.

The believers from the villages from around keep the image of Abbot Irodion, piously, in their homes, and when the experience some troubles, they come to Lainici Hermitage where they pray, they touch the Pious' tomb, with their clothes, they kiss his cross, and they leave, comforted, for their homes.

God is wonderful into His saints, God of our fathers!

ARCHIMANDRITE CHIRIAC NICOLAU
Neamț Monastery
(1839-1907)

This Pious Archimandrite Fathers from Neamț Monastery remained in the memory of his descendants, especially by his benefaction and of Christian giving of alms works, which we ought to mention. He originated from Humulești Village. During the Independence War from the year 1877, he was on the battle field, as helper of a general. After the general had got sick and had felt his end drawing near, he entrusted his helper with a sum of money, with the obligation of using that money for works of Christian benefaction.

After the war had ended, Sergeant Constantin Chiriac turned home and entered Neamț Monastery as a brother. Abbot Timothy, seeing his obedience and zeal for the spiritual things, he made him monk, and then deacon and priest. Trying to fulfil with unblemished conscience the desire of the general

who dies far from his country, Hieromonk Chiriac Nicolau used the money he received from the general for helping the sick and for enlightening the illiterate children.

In the year 1895, he built a primary school having 4 classrooms, in the Vânători- Neamţ Village, as one can see even today, and he endowed that school with a precious library containing hundreds of books printed by our old churchly printing presses. Also, he donated another sum of money to the public hospital from Tg. Neamţ, and he donated another sum of money for comforting the sick people and for making some renewals to the hospital's facilities. The remaining money was shared by him to monasteries and to churches, for the resting of the passed away general.

In the year 1890, Hieromonk Chiriac Nicolau was made confessor and archimandrite to the community of Neamţ Monastery, and he was, for a few years, chair-archimandrite at the Bishopric of Ismail and Lower Danube. For almost 20 years as he continued living, he officiated, with much piousness, the holy religious services, without missing from the church and occupying himself with taking the confessions from the believers and from the monks, who had him as their spiritual father.

In the year 1907, Archimandrite Chiriac went toward the Lord, in order to receive the payment for his toils.

HIEROSCHEMAMONK NECTAREOUS
Almaş-Neamţ Monastery
(1835-1912)

Father Nectareous was a great hesychastic confessor. He originated from Trutuş River Valley. After finishing his military service, he became a monk at Bogdana Monastery – Tg. Ocna. But because of being him very craving for the unblemished quietude, he withdrew himself on Caşin Mountains, where he became a famous hermit. Schemamonk Nectareous lived, in quietude, for more than 20 years, in the ancestral forests of Caşin Mountains, where were living in ascesis others loving-of Christ monks too. There Pious Nectareous tasted the sweetness of the quietude and he learnt the secret work of the *Prayer to Jesus*.

In the year 1882, the Abbot-Nun of Almaş-Neamţ Monastery, Schema-nun Suzanna Ştefănescu, because of the monastery remaining without priest, she asked the Bishop of Roman, Melchizedek – who was her brother – to send them a good confessor. Then the Bishop summoned Father Nectareous from Caşin Mountains and ordained him priest and sent him as confessor to Almaş-Neamţ Monastery.

For 30 years, this humble hesychast was the only servant, adviser, and spiritual father of Almaş-Neamţ Monastery, which counted up to 40 nuns. And the ascesis of confessor Nectareous was this:

He was daily officiating the Holy Liturgy and the whole praying program with a great piousness. He was spending the rest of his time alone, in godlike cogitations and in working the *Prayer to Jesus*. He was receiving the confession of the congregation weekly, on Sunday. Nobody saw him laughing or uttering useless words. He was speaking very little and very wisely. He ate once a day, and if he had something more than he needed, he shared that to the poor people and to the old nuns. He was spending his night in prayers and in reading the Holy Scriptures. Towards morning, he was sleeping for two or three hours, and then he came to the church.

For the holiness of his life, Father Nectareous was very loved and searched for by believers. He received the confession of some of them, he advised others, and to the sick ones he was reading and, according to the testimony of his disciples, many of them were healed of their sufferings.

In the year 1910, Hieroschemamonk Nectareous became ill in his feet. He was day and night praying in his monastic cell, because of being unable to go to the church. And during the last night of his life, he stayed on his knees, for several hours, talking to somebody unseen. In the morning the nuns asked him:

- Who have you been talking to, Father Nectareous, for you have been all the night talking to somebody but there was nobody?

- During the past night I have seen, on a vast plain, a multitude of naked people, whom I have taken their confessions from, but who haven't fulfilled their penances, but they died while still under the obligation to do their penances. All of them have been begging me to absolve them of penance so that they could be found worthy of crown. I have been talking to them for the whole last night! An hour later, Pious Nectareous the Hieroschemamonk yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord, and he was buried next to the church.

It was the summer of the year 1912.

OLD MAN GHEORGHE LAZARUS
Văratec Monastery
(1846-1916)[312]

a. His Life

Pious Gheorghe Lazarus was the role-model of the true Romanian pilgrim. By his totally exquisite way of living, he constitutes a unique example in the spiritual life of our Church, during the last one hundred years.

Old Man Gheorghe Lazarus, as he has been called until today, was born in Şugag Commune, Alba County, in the year 1946. When he was 24, his parents organized his wedding and appointed him inheritor of their entire wealth. And he lived in marriage, with his wife Pelaghia, for almost 20 years,

[312] According to the testimonies of his disciples, Archimandrite Mina Prodan and Protosyncellus Damaschin Trofin from Neamț Monastery.

being blessed by God with five children. They lived a Christian life, in honest work, in prayer, in fasting, and in giving of alms. They occupation was to raise cattle.

In the year 1884, he went to bow down in front of the Lord's Tomb, and he remained at the monasteries from Jordan's desert and from Sinai, for a year. Then he lived in ascesis, for a year and a half, at Mount Athos, and then he turned back to his country. Here he continued living for a few more years in his family, he helped his children to start a living by themselves, and in the year 1890 he withdrew himself, as pilgrim, towards the monasteries from Moldavia.

After bowing down in front of all holy dwelling places, Old Man Gheorghe Lazarus settled himself down, definitively, in Piatra-Neamț City, and he lived in ascesis for 26 years, as a true hermit, until he passed away, in the bell-tower built by Stephen the Great in the middle of the city. There he lived in ascesis, alone, in fasting and in prayer, summer and winter, without fire, without bed, without two coats, barefooted, living by the gift from God and by the mercy of the people.

Thus, by being well-pleasant to God, and knowing his end in advance, he passed away, peacefully, in his monastic cell, on 15th of August 1916, and he was buried in the city's monastery. In the summer of the year 1934, his relics were placed in the cemetery of Văratec Monastery.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Faithful Gheorghe Lazarus was, during his life, a man of the prayer. He was reading the *Book of Psalms* the most. Since his early youth, he was carrying it with himself and, while herding the cattle of his parents, on the mountains, he was always reading the psalms of David, until he learnt them by heart.

2. Wanting very much to bow down in front of Lord's Tomb, in the spring of the year 1884, he bagged the *Gospel* and the *Book of Psalms*, he set his house in order, he took his staff and he left for Jerusalem. He walked all the way to Constanza Harbor, and there he boarded a ship, while ceaselessly uttering the psalms of David. When he arrived to the Holy Tomb, he prayed with so much faith and with so many tears, that he amazed everybody there. And he stayed in Jerusalem for 40 days.

3. He later on told to his disciples that, aspiring to experience the ascesis of the monks from the Holy Land, he went to bow down in all the monasteries from Judean desert and from Jordan Valley. There he firstly arrived, together with many pilgrims, to a famous hermit who was living in ascesis in the cave of Saint Xenophon. The hermit was just feeding a lion at the entrance of his cave. Then, after sending the lion into desert, he called Old Man Gheorghe on his name, telling him through the mediation of an interpreter:

- Brother Gheorghe, come and do not fear. Be your faith mentioned in front of Christ and be your prayers heard by the ears of Lord Sabaoth! I know your love and I know the zeal of your heart, that of serving Him for your whole

life. So, tarry for a while, in the monasteries from Palestine, in fasting and in prayer, and when the Holy Ghost will command you to, come back to see me.

4. With the blessing of that hermit, Old Man Gheorghe spent a year in the monasteries from Palestine. He stayed for a month in each monastery. He was helping to watering the gardens, and at night he was reading the *Book of Psalms* in the church, and he was uttering the *Prayer to Jesus*. And after that month drew to an end, he left that monastery for another monastery.

The old man lived thus in ascesis, in fasting, in prayer, and in silence, unknown to anybody. Then he went back to his kind teacher from the wilderness.

5. Welcoming him, the hermit asked him:

- Brother Gheorghe, how does your ghost feel?

- It feels well, by the prayers of your holiness, father.

- You must know, brother, that you are not called to become a monk, but you will live in a harsher ascesis than that of a monk. You will live walking from place to place, in prayer, in fasting, and in deep shortage. But, if you ceaselessly have your mind at God, His gift will be with you and you will defeat all temptations from the enemy. Do not gather wealth to yourself, while on earth; honor the monks and the priests, advise the laypeople, help the poor as much as you can, pray in churches day and night, and so you will be saved.

- But how could I be able to fulfill all of these, because I am weak and helpless?

- Go into wilderness, where there is no man present, and fast for forty days. And for the weakness of your nature take with you some bread and water. But take heed because many temptations and devilish hallucinations are going to happen to you. If you finish these days well, you will receive a great gift from God and you will overcome all the traps of the cunning devil.

6. The good ascetic crossed Jordan River, taking with him only the *Gospel*, the *Book of Psalms*, and there he fasted for 40 days into wilderness, ceaselessly praying and from time to time strengthening himself with a little food. But he suffered many temptations during those days. That was because, sometimes, the enemy scared him with hallucinations of wild beasts and of venomous snakes, while on some other times the enemy tormented him with the hunger, with the thirst, with the heat, and especially with the mosquitos and with all sorts of insects. But, by the help of God, he was delivered of all of those.

One day, the enemy had thrown his hat away, in order to disturb him from praying. Then he promised to God that he will never wear a hat again. On some other day the enemy had thrown his boots and he never found them again. Since then, the good ascetic started to walk barefooted for his entire life. And on some other day, the enemy appeared to him as a plowman and told him:

- Old Gheorghe, do you see this furrow?

- Yes, I am seeing it, the old man answered.

- Isn't it straight?

- Yes, it is.

- Lo, his faith in God is straight as this furrow! The enemy added, trying to throw him in the sin of the pride. But Old Gheorghe, marking upon himself the sigh of the Holy cross, he banished the devil from him.

7. After the 40 days had come to an end, Old Man Gheorghe went against to the hermit from the wilderness. And the hermit, kissing him goodbye, told him:

- Brother Gheorghe, for you have defeated the enemy and for you haven't allowed yourself deceived by his traps, lo that God have given you the gift of the clean prayer and spiritual power for your ascesis. This is for you are going to walk barefooted for your entire life, and without wearing a hat, but neither the cold nor the heat, nor the sickness will harm you.

Then the old man, after prostrating in front of his teacher, he turned back to Jerusalem, he bowed down in front of Lord's Tomb, he received the All-Clean-Mysteries, and he left for Mount Athos. There he tarried for another year and a half, bowing down in all holy dwelling places from there and visiting the pious monks from monasteries and from caves there. Then, after taking blessing from all of them, he turned again in the bosom of his family.

8. His disciples said that Old Man Gheorghe didn't stay for long in Şugag. But, after setting his house in good order, and after starting their living for his children, he left to bow down in monasteries and in hermitages. Dressed up in a waistcoat, barefooted, wearing nothing on his head, holding the *Book of Psalms* and his walking-staff, the good pilgrim was walking by foot, from village to village, from monastery to monastery, uttering the *Prayer to Jesus* and the psalms. During day he was traveling, on evening he tarried in villages, as close as possible to churches. After he rested for a few hours, he entered the church and prayer there, alone, with secret prayers, until next morning. Then he left again.

So lived in ascesis Old Gheorghe Lazarus for three years, travelling all over Transylvania and The Romanian Country, praying in churches and in monasteries, as a true pilgrim of our Orthodox Church.

9. In the year 1890, Old Gheorghe Lazarus went to bow down in the monasteries from Moldavia, tarrying in each holy place. Then he settled himself down, definitively, at Saint John the Baptist Church from Piatra Neamţ, built by Voivode Stephen the Great. And he dwelled in the belltower of that church for 26 years, in harsh ascesis, as a true pillar-hermit and hesychast in the middle of the world, being loved by everybody and praying for everyone.

10. The ascesis of Old Gheorghe Lazarus, according to the testimony of his disciples, Archimandrite Mina Prodan and Protosyncellus Damaschin Trofin from Neamţ Monastery, it was this:

- In the morning, he left with his walking-staff and with his *Book of Psalms*, to visit the families where he was invited, or in the street, uttering the psalms by heart. From the money he received as alms, he bought several bread loaves, and at noon, when he turned back, he shared those bread loaves to the

poor from the city who were waiting for him in front of the belfry. To some of them he was giving bread, to some others of them he was giving money, and so he shared everything he had received from believers. Then he went up in the tower, alone, only with his *Book of Psalms*. After sunset, he ate only boiled vegetables and he went to sleep immediately.

At 11 o'clock pm, he came down from the tower and locked himself in the church and he prayed there alone, unknown to anybody, until next morning. At dawn he left the church and went to buy bread for the poor people.

11. The *Book of Psalms* was the prayer book most loved by Old Man Gheorghe Lazarus. He knew it by heart since his youth and he regularly uttered it daily. But on the street, the old man uttered the psalms with a loud voice and taking his time, saying:

- Let's now start uttering the nice prayers of the first chapter!

After finishing, he added:

- Let's now star uttering the nice prayers of the second chapter!

And he continued so until he finished the *Book of Psalms*. Then he shared alms and after that he went up again in the tower of the belfry.

12. the disciples of the Old Man said that the people from the city and from the surrounding areas knew him and benefited much of his chosen life. Young and old, villagers and townspeople, all of them were calling him "Old Man Gheorghe". And when he crossed through villages or when he walked in the street, some of them were kissing the *Book of Psalms* he was carrying always with him, others were giving him alms, the children were stopping from playing, the cows on the field were stopping for a while from grazing, and the dogs were never barking at him. Many believers accompanied him, piously walking behind him and listening to the psalms he was uttering by heart.

13. The same disciples said that the highest prayer of the Old Man was that during night, which he was uttering into the church. For 30 years he never missed even once from the church, He entered the church around 11 at night, and he left the church 4 or 5 in the morning. Wherever he dwelled for the night, in cities, in villages, or in monasteries, he thoroughly kept this rule. This was the fire-prayer of Old Man Gheorghe Lazarus done by him secretly, unknown to people.

14. His disciple, Protosyncellus Damaschin Trofin from Neamț Monastery said the followings

-As I originate from Piatra- Neamț, Old Man Gheorghe often visited our house. One day, when I was 15, the old man told to my father:

- Dear, please allow the child to pray, together with me, on the evening, in the church!

- I allow him to do that, Old Man Gheorghe.

And we left, together, for the Saint John the Lordy church.

At night, at 11 o'clock, Old Man Gheorghe opened the church and locked ourselves inside the church. He sent me to the pew to read, with a low voice, from *The Book of Hours*, and he remained in the nave. I was peeking to see how

he was praying, but I didn't understand what he was saying. Then he uttered a few chapters from the *Book of Psalms*. Then he had put the psaltery aside and he started uttering, to each saint from the calendar, this short prayer:

- Holy all-pious Father (the name…), pray to God for us, the sinners!

After that, he started mentioning, by heart, all the people who had given him alms on that day, without missing anyone. For each of them he made a bow and uttered this prayer:

- All-Holy Trinity, have mercy on this person who has had mercy on me, the sinner! Then he placed his waistcoat, his *Book od Plsams*, and his walking staff in the pew, and he started doing prostrations while uttering the *Prayer to Jesus*, for more than an hour. And when he noticed that it started dawning, he came and told me:

- Now let's go, dear!

15. In addition to prayer and to giving of alms, Old Man Gheorghe Lazarus had also a harsh bodily ascesis, which he surpassed everyone through. Summer and winter, he was walking barefooted and bareheaded, regardless how hot or how cold it was. In winter steams were coming out of his top of the head, and the snow and the ice were melting under his soles, so that everybody wondered about that and they extolled God. The fathers who knew Old Man Gheorghe said the he was never ill, for the gift of God was with him.

16. When he was still living in Transylvania, he crossed the Carpathian Mountains, barefooted, to visit Ialomicioarei Hermitage. There, after seeing that the church had no stove for heating, he asked the abbot:

- How do you stay in the church without making a fire for heating?

- We don't have money for buying a stove, the abbot answered him, in the same time wondering that a barefooted man asked him about cold.

After that, Old Man Gheorghe bought a stove from Sinaia and sent it to that hermitage.

17. Once, while he was crossing through a village in winter, the people saw him barefooted and told him:

- Old Man Gheorghe, don't you want us to buy some sandals for you?

- Don't mind, my dear, the old man answered them, for my feet are warmer than yours!

18. On occasions, this wonderful old man went to bow in the holy monasteries. This was for he was known to the fathers and all the fathers were welcoming him with love. And he was staying up to a week in each holy place, keeping his rule of prayer unchanged, and tarrying in spiritual dialogues with the monks from there. The most beloved monasteries to the Old Man Gheorghe were: Bistriţa, Neamţ, Sihăstria, Sihla, Agapia, Văratec, and Nechit.

19. The news about his ascesis reached far, beyond Moldavia's borders. That's why many people came to him, asking him for useful word. Some of them came and asked him to pray for them. Some others asked him for alms. And the Old Man, being gentle, and sweet and wise in speaking, he was comforting and souly building all of them.

20. There were coming to visit Old Man Gheorghe even young people from Transylvania and from Moldavia, who were wanting to serve Christ. And him, for he had the gift of the foreseeing, he was sending some of them to the monasteries from Moldavia, or from the Holy Mountain, and he sent others to their homes. He had the most disciples at Neamţ Monastery, and among nuns, at Agapia and at Văratec Monesteries. But all his disciples reached to be consummate monks and nuns.

21. Once a young man coming from Zărneşti asked him:

- Old Man Gheorghe, I want to become a monk. What monastery should I go?

- Listen, dear. If you want to be saved, go there where are more temptations!

22. On some other occasion his disciple, Dumitru Trofin from Piatra Neamţ, asked him:

- Old Man Gheorghe, I've decided to go to the Holy Mountain. What do you advise me?

- My dear, do not go to the Holy Mountain. You can be a good monk here too. Go to Sihăstria. There is a chosen abbot and he greatly needs new brothers. So, listening to him, his disciple went there and he became a skilled confessor.

23. Other two disciples of the old man, called John and Constantin Păvălucă, famous mountaineers from Breţcu Commune – Covasna, asked him:

- Old Man Gheorghe, we both want to become monks. We will donate our wealth, consisting of 500 sheep, to the monastery. Which monastery should we go to?

- My dears, go to Neamţ Monastery. There is your salvation!

24. On occasions, the old man withdrew himself to Sihăstria Monastery, whose abbot was Protosyncellus Ioanichie Moroi was his first disciple. At night, he was praying, according to his habit, in the church, and during the day he was praying and reading the *Book of Psalms* at a secret place on the mountain, called The Ember.

25. Once, Old Man Gheorghe went up to Sihla Hermitage, accompanied by several fathers from Sihăstria Monastery. The old man was leading the procession, secretly uttering the *Prayer to Jesus*. Then, suddenly, he tripped and he almost fell. Then he turned towards the fathers and he told them:

- Have you seen what had happened to me? I have left the prayer only for a little while, and the gift of God has immediately left me. Immediately as I descended with my mind I has stumbled and I've almost fell.

26. This wonderful old man had achieved from God the gift of the all-holy *Prayer to Jesus*, which he was uttering it with his mind and with his heart. But he never talked to anyone about that wonderful work. He only taught his older daughter, Ana, the *Prayer to Jesus*, while he still was living in his family. His daughter said about that:

- I was always been repeating the prayer "*Lord Jesus*", as my father had advised me, but I couldn't utter it attentively. My mind always got scattered, despite I was praying for the whole day. It seemed to me that my attention was at my face and not at my heart. Because of that I was very sad and I was praying to God to give me the gift of the prayer.

Once, as I was passing by a roadside crucifix, at cross-roads, I bowed in front of it with a great faith. On that moment I felt a power entering my heart. Since then, my mind descends within my heart and I am always praying with untold joy and warmth.

27. The disciples of the Old Man Gheorghe said that on one occasion, while he was as usual praying into the church, the enemy openly shown himself to him and angrily asked him:

- What are you doing here?

- I am praying to God! The old man answered daringly.

- You are doing good! The enemy told him before vanishing away.

28. Some other time, the old man told to his disciples:

- On a Sunday, when I was coming to the church, I saw at the village's pub… (*here two rows of the source text are illegible*[313]).

29. They said about him that if somebody gave him alms more than a unit of currency, he wouldn't want to receive it, but instead he gently said:

- My dear, give that money to the poor, for God commands us so!

30. Once a poor woman came to see him and told him, crying:

- Old Man Gheorghe, I am a widow, and I have five children at school, and I have no money.

- How much do you need? the old man asked her.

- I need a hundred units of currency.

The he gave her everything he received from people on that day.

31. The old people from Piatra-Neamţ said that during winter, regardless how freezing it was, Old Man Gheorghe was slowly walking in the street, barefooted and bareheaded, through blizzard and snowdrifts, while uttering the *Book of Psalms* by heart. And when he passed by bakeries, he entered and placed a foot on the embers hearth until the ice fell off from between his toes. Then he left, continuing to pray.

32. Sometimes, his disciples were asking him:

- When are you going to die, Old Man Gheorghe?

- My dears, do you know when? When the peoples will uprise, and at my death there will be celebrated a great religious feast, and all the bells from the country will ring!

33. On 15th of August 1916, on the celebration day of the Dormition of the Mother of the Lord, when the bell-ringer was going up the tower of the Saint Lordy Church from Piatra-Neamţ in order to ring the bells for general mobilization, he found Old Man Gheorghe lying down, having the *Book of*

[313] (E. l. t.'s n.)

Psalms next to him. On that very moment, the venerable pilgrim had yielded his soul in the hands of Christ God!

Thousands of believers accompanied him on his last road, as he was buried in the city's cemetery, dressed up with his waistcoat, and having his *Book of Psalms* and his staff next to him.

34. And the moving of his relics from Piatra-Neamţ to Văratec Monastery took place thus:

In the year 1934, Protosyncellus Damaschin Trofin, his disciple, being Abbot of Rîşca Monastery, he wanted to bring the relics of Old Man Gheorghe to Rîşca Monastery. So, they placed hi relics in a coffin, and they hit the road towards Tîrgu-Neamţ. At the crossroads towards Văratec Monastery, the horses stopped and refused to go any further. Father Damaschin vainly tried to make them continue walking. Then, suddenly, the horses started galloping towards Văratec Monastery and they didn't stop but when reaching in the front of Văratec Monastery.

The Abbot understood that that was the will of the blessed Old Man Gheorghe Lazarus, so that he officiated the burial service in the church, together with the entire community of the nuns, and they placed his bones in a grave, under the alter, where they are even today.

Blessed are, Lord, they whom You have received and chosen!

MONK SYLVESTER AILINCĂI
Durau-Neamţ Monastery
(† 1919)

Father Sylvester originated from Buhalniţa-Neamţ Village. In his youth he was married and he had two children. Then, he had renounced to everything and became a monk to Durau Monastery. He was to humble and obedient that all the monks there benefited of his gentleness and ascesis. He was illiterate, but he was praying day and night, he was doing prostrations, he was working in the garden, and he never missed the religious services from the church. He also has a great piousness towards the Mother of the Lord. He was praying in front of Her icon, saying:

- Mother of the Lord, help me the sinner. Mother of the lord, give me the good end! Then he kissed the icon and went to fulfill his tasks, having his eyes full of tears.

Once his disciple asked him:

- Why do you do so many prostrations?

- I am doing so many prostrations because of my many sins! I do prostrations also for the seven praises, for I do not know how to read them in my monastic cell. I do prostrations for my children and for all the people, because they do not have time for praying.

Father Sylvester god totally deaf, for he was over 90 years old. But he still was attending the church.

On day the fathers asked him:

- How do you manage to wake up at night for Matins, Father Sylvester, because you cannot hear the bell?

- The Mother of the Lord takes care of me the sinner. When I go to bed I say: "Mother of the Lord, wake me up to the holy prayer!". And at midnight, when the semantron calls for Matins, somebody touches me gently and I immediately wake up.

On occasions he was telling towards the fathers:

- I wonder why my death doesn't come to me? One can see that I am a sinner and God hasn't forgiven me yet! Fathers, pray for me! was the old man adding, shedding tears.

So lives Father Sylvester in ascesis, at Durau Monastery, for more than 20[314] years. And everybody loved him for he was spiritually advances and without evilness. So, as his life was, so it was his end too.

In the autumn of the year 1919, when all the brothers and the monks was at Matins and they were singing "You Who are more honored than the cherubs…", Father Sylvester was doing prostrations, as usual, in front of the icon of the Mother of the Lord. Then he remained kneeled, with his forehead touching the floor. The fathers thought that he fell asleep. At the end of the religious service, they tried to wake him up, telling him:

- Wake up, Father Sylvester, for the Matins has ended! But, o glorious wonder! Father Sylvester yielded his ghost in front of the icon of the All-Holy Virgin!

Then the fathers wrapped him in his coat, they placed him in the middle of the church, and on the third day they accompanied him to his grave and buried him.

SCHEMAMONK IRINARCHUS ŞIŞMAN
Prodromul Hermitage – Mount Athos
(1845-1920)[315]

This loving-of-ascesis Schemamonk was born in Mileşti Commune – Dolj County, in the year 1845. As growing up he succeeded in achieving a thorough education, for he knew four foreign languages, and towards the final stage of his life he had his heart wounded towards the love for Christ.

So, he renounced to everything and he listened to the voice of the *Gospel*, and in the year 1884 he went to Mount Athos and became schemamonk in the Romanian Hermitage Podromul. And he was very zealous in the monastic

[314] It seems to us that this number can be wrong. If he came to monastery at a young age, or even in the prime of his life, and he was 90 when dying, he should live more than 20 years in the monastery. (E. l. t.'s n.)

[315] According to the Archive of Prodromul Hermitage.

ascesis, he was quiet, he was humble, and he was patient. Having Pious Nectareous the Chief-Singer as his teacher, he learnt from his teacher the secret working of the *Prayer to Jesus*, which is the end of the whole philosophy. He was doing manual labor during the day, in the garden, and he was praying with his mind, and at night he was going to the church, he was reading the holy books, and he was appeasing himself into his monastic cell, waiting, joyfully, for the coming of the Lord.

In the year 1898, Pious Irinarchus was urged by the Holy Ghost to write, in details, the history of the Romanian monasticism on Mount Athos, using several sources existing in the Athonite libraries. So, after taking blessing from the miracle-working icon of the Mother of the Lord, called Podromița, and from Pious Gideon Georgescu, the abbot of the hermitage, he immediately started working.

His work is called *The History of the Holy Mountain*, and it is composed of 20 tomes, containing over ten thousand pages. The first 17 tomes treat, in details, the history of the 20 big monasteries, starting with the Century I until the beginning of the Century XX. The tome no. 18 treats about the miracle-working icons from Mount Athos, presenting numerous miracles of the Mother of the lord, in 150 paragraphs. The tome no. 19 contains maps of "the monasteries of the Holy Mountain", "The Lilies of the Paradise", "The Flower of the Gift", "The Saints of Athos" etc. And the tome no 20 treats, in its first part, the history of the Romanian Athonite monasticism, from its beginning up to the year 1916, mentioning the over one hundred monastic cells inhabited by Romanians, during his time, and other precious statistical data. The last part of the tome no. 20 contains "The History of Podromul Hermitage".

Pious Irinarchus started writing his monumental work in the year 1898 and, after many toils and heavy temptations from people and from the devil, as himself said it, and he finished it on 6th of September 1916. On the first page he started with this prayer: "Lord, my God, help me to this work, in order Your holy name to be extolled forever, amen. For with Yor gift all things are finished with peace. For You are the beginning and the end, and without Your gift nothing is finished".

Schemamonk Irinarchus confessed that in the year 1905, while he was writing about the miracles of the Mother of the Lord and of Her icons from Mount Athos, suddenly, a big rock feel through his window and broke it, and it broke also the lamp he was writing at, and it hit him on the hand which he was writing with. But he, asking for the help of the All-Pious Virgin, continued writing. Sometimes he ran out of ink and paper, on some other times the brothers from the hermitage were angry on him and accused him of avoiding to go out and do manual labor. But the old man endured all of those and with his gentleness he always made peace.

The monographic work of the taught Schemamonk Irinarchus has a unique value, both from historical and literary points of view, and especially from spiritual point of view. His work if the richest historical monograph of the Athonite monasticism, written after the year 1850. Schemamonk Irinarchus

Şişman remains the first Romanian Athonite historian and one of the best historians ever produced by Mount Athos. This humble ascetic was also a great praying monk, and a talented calligrapher and miniaturist, writing his work in a beautiful calligraphy, with exquisite page-borders, ornaments, and miniatural icons, all of them worked by his hand.

The last years of his life were spent by Schemamonk Irinarchus only in fasting, in prayer, and in cogitating at the godlike things. Then, feeling his end near, he received the All-Clean Mysteries and he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hands of Christ.

NUN MARY STURZA
Agapia Monastery
(† 1920)

This worthy of remembrance nun was, in her youth, the wife of Prince Grigorie Mihail Sturza; she originated from Miclăupşeşti Village – Iaşi. Although she was born to a family of Moldavian rulers, she loved Christ from her youth, she was reading the Holy Scriptures, and she was adorning the churches with vestments and embroideries made, tenaciously, by her hands.

After her husband died, Raluca Sturza shared most of her wealth – land, money, books, and jewelry – to churches and to monasteries, and to poor people. It was towards the end of the XIX Century. After few years of prayer and humbleness, Sister Raluca Sturza became of monk under the name Mary. And she was very gentle and merciful. She was helping all the other nuns and she was talking to them spiritually and she had a good word for each of them, or a book, or a small thing worked by her hands. That's why she was love by the entire community and they called it as "our good mother".

She also knew foreign languages, she was reading many chosen books, she knew how to make embroideries, and she was making ornaments and miniatures in natural colors, as flowers, as nobody else. But above everything she knew well the Holy *Gospel* and she was striving to fulfill it. She knew how to endure, how to keep her silence, how to humble herself, and especially how to pray. That's why all the nuns were benefiting of her ascesis and humbleness and they were honoring her as a true spiritual mother of theirs.

After Agapia Monastery was burnt down, in the year 1903, Mother Mary Sturza proved herself to be the first and the biggest donor. Gathering material and financial donations from her relatives and from many families of believers, she encouraged the community of the monastery, and they repaired the chapel having the patronage of "The Dormition of the Mother of the Lord", and they contributed to rebuilding the monastic cells from inside the enclosure.

So lived and sacrificed herself for the love for Christ, this chosen flower from Moldavia's land. So, reaching her old age, Mother Mary Sturza moved to the resting from above, in the year 1920, being mourned by the entire community.

ARCHIMANDRITE BESARION IONESCU
Abbot of Cernica Monastery
(1847-1921)

This All-Pious Archimandrite was a venerable Abbot of Cernica Monastery, from Century XX. He originated from Tîrgovişte. When he was 13 years old (1860), he entered Cernica Monastery's community, being found worthy of the blessings and of the advice of Saint Hierarch Calinic. Taking upon himself the yoke of Christ and advancing much in obedience, in gentleness, and in humbleness, he was found worthy, from his youth, of the gift of the priesthood. Later on, he reached to be chosen confessor by the community of Cernica, and so he spiritually raised numerous brothers from monastery and laypeople from surrounding areas.

In the year 1872, Hieromonk Besarion was appointed steward of the monastery, a task which he fulfilled with a rare skillfulness, with gentleness, and with justice, for 25 years. During that time, he renewed several blocks of monastic cells, he built access roads, and he put the monastery's wealth in good order.

In the summer of the year 1896, Hieromonk Besarion Ionescu was elected abbot of Cernica Monastery, by the community from there. For other 25 years, the Pious and Gentle Besarion guided the Cernica's community, which counted at that time over 100 monks. His first care was that for adorning the church with exquisite religious services, with priests, and with best possible churchly singers. The whole community owed to attend the church's religious services, except those who were sick of fulfilling ordered tasks. The brothers confessed their sins weekly, and they were administrated the Holy Impartation once a month. To the general tasks Archimandrite Besarion was walking in front of everybody, making himself example of prayer, humbleness, and spiritual joy. For his wisdom and for his gentleness, Abbot Besarion was love and respected by everybody, both my monks and by laypeople. This was because he was searching for the souly benefit of the others, and only after that he took care of himself.

So lived in ascesis Pious Archimandrite Besarion Ionescu, for more than 60 years, in the Holy Cernica Monastery, burning like a clean torch in plain sight of everybody and sacrificing himself for the glory of Christ and for the salvation of his spiritual sons. Then, feeling his death near, he asked everybody for forgiveness and passed away peacefully, leaving behind a chosen community counting more than 120 fathers and brothers.

ARCHIMANDRITE CALLISTOS GHEORGHIU
Neamţ Monastery
(1853-1923)

This skilled confessor of Neamţ Monastery originated from Moţca Commune, Iaşi County. When he was 20 years old, he put on the monastic coat in the community of the great monastery, under the guidance of Pious Abbot Timothy Ionescu. After several years of obedience, he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, reaching to be a good servant of the Church of Christ.

Between the years 1890-1895, Hieromonk Callistos lived at Secu Monastery. Then, he turned back to the monastery where he had become a monk, and he reached there the most famous confessor of the Neamţ Monastery. For 30 years, Father Callistos sacrificed himself for others' salvation. To him were confessing their sins bishops, abbots, confessors, monks from the community, parishioner priests, and a big number of laypeople.

According to the testimony of the old fathers remembering him even today, Archimandrite Callistos was a father of the love. One could see two great deeds at him: his gentleness and his giving of alms. He received everybody with the same love, he received their confession of sins according to the rule, he encouraged them and he advised them on the path to salvation. No one left his monastic cell unappeased. Then he shared the gift he received from believers, immediately, to monk and to poor people. His name was known in many villages, and especially in Pipirig, where he used to go personally for sharing clothes, food, and money to the needy.

After an ascesis like this, in the summer of the year 1923, Archimandrite Callistos Gheorghiu moved to the eternal resting, mourned with tears by his numerous spiritual sons.

HERMIT GHERASIM GREERUŞ
Caşin Mountains – Bacău
(† 1925)

Pious Schemamonk Gherasim was one of the great hermits of our monasticism from Century XIX: He originated from Botoşani County.

He lived in ascesis, in the first place, in Cozancea Hermitage – Botoşani Country. Then, because of burning of his longing for the blessed quietude, in the year 1899 he left Cozancea, together with his abbot, Hieromonk Sylvester, for Tarniţa Hermitage – Vrancea County. Hieromonk Sylvester remained abbot of the new hermitage, and Schemamonk Gherasim chose for himself the hermit-like life, and he withdrew himself in the ancestral forests from Măgura Odobeşti. There he lived in ascesis, alone, for his love for Christ, and he didn't

receive anyone in his shack. He was praying, for the whole week, on the mountain, and he was doing manual labor by carving wooden spoons and trays, and by intertwining baskets. Then he brought them down to Tarnița and he received, in food in exchange – dry bread, potatoes, and salt.

After a certain time, he became famous and the believers started searching for him and visiting him at his shack, for advice and for prayer. Then, Hermit Gherasim left Măgura Odobeşti and moved himself to Caşin Mountains, from Bacău County. There he continued the same harsh ascesis of prayer and of loneliness, reaching famous in all surrounding villages. So, after seeing that many believers were bothering him by paying him visits to his shack, he moved himself higher in the Caşin Mountains, in the area surrounding Bogdana Monastery – Tg. Ocna.

For his chosen life, Pious Gherasim was found by God worthy of the gift of working miracle and of fore-seeing. Once he was crossing through a mountain village and he saw in the yard of a man an ill ox, so that he immediately marked the sign of the cross upon that ox and that ox was healed. On another occasion, everybody thought that the shack of the hermit was burning in a forest fire. But the Pious raised his hands in prayer, and the forest fire was immediately quenched.

On a Sunday the old man descended to Bodgana Monastery and, seeing two brothers, he told to the first one:

- Brother Nicholas, your brotherhood won't remain into monastery!

And to the other brother he told:

- Brother Costache, you will remain into monastery and you will become monk and priest!

These two predictions of the old man, proved to be accurate.

So lived Pious Gherasim in ascesis, until the year 1925. Then, he asked for a confessor from Bogdana Monastery, he received the All-Clean Mysteries, and he yielded his soul into the hands of the lord. The fathers buried him in the forest, next to his shack, and his cross can be seen even today.

NUN ELISABETH VLAHUȚĂ
Agapia Monastery
(1850-1925)[316]

He originated from Pleşeşti Village – Bârlad County. Two years after her husband died, she withdrew herself to Agapia Monastery, consecrating herself to Christ the rest of her life.

In the year 1880 she had received the monastic countenance and after that she humbled herself in the monastic ascesis for other almost fifty years. And Mother Elisabeth was very zealous to the spiritual things, loving the church, and receiving the strangers. She had in her monastic cell five more

[316] Nun Elisabeth Vlahuță (Străjescu) was the elder sister of poet Alexandru Vlahuță.

spiritual daughters, whom he raised form their young age into the love for God, as a true other, always nourishing them with the words of the Holy Fathers. Mother Elisabeth Vlahuţă was famous in Agapia Monastery and everybody benefited of her wisdom and humbleness.

In the year 1890 her bodily parents too, took upon themselves the yoke of Christ, becoming nun and monk under the names of Elisabeth and Nectareous. Later on, her younger brother too became a monk, under the name Mardarie. And it was a wonderful thing to see an entire family consecrated to Christ, urging one another to prayer and to the good deed.

So toiled Mother Elisabeth Vlahuţă in the middle of her disciples, always extolling God and serving to people. Then her parents – Monk Nectareous and Nun Elisabeth – moved to the eternal life, and they were buried in the monastery's grave. And in the summer of the year 1925 passed away also Mother Elisabeth, the one loving of much toil, and she was buried next to the tomb of her parents, so that they will gladden themselves together in the light of Christ.

SCHEMANONK SUZANNA ŞTEFĂNESCU
Războieni Monastery – Neamţ County
(1830-1925)

She was the youngest daughter of the venerable Priest Petru Ştefănescu from Gîrcina Commune - Neamţ County, and she was also the sister of Melchizedek, Bishop of Roman.

Wanting to serve to Christ from her early childhood, she went to Văratec Monastery, together with her sister Helena. There they learnt how to read and write, at the school from the monastic cells of the Saint John the Baptist church. There she learnt how to sing to the lord, day and night, how to pray, how to be obedient, and how to sacrifice herself for everybody.

After receiving the monastic countenance, Schema-Nun Suzanna lived, for a while, at Văratec Monastery. Then she was appointed abbot and spiritual mother to Almas Hermitage – Neamţ County, where were living in ascesis more than 20 nuns. In that hermitage he made many renewals, by repairing the church and the monastic cells and forming, together with her disciples, a true monastic family.

In the year 1906, Schema-Nun Suzanna was appointed abbot to Războieni Monastery, - Neamţ County, a famous foundation from the year 1496 of Voivode Stephen the Great. There she continued the same spiritual activity for 20 more years, maintaining the chain of the monastic religious services and praying to God for the whole world and for the martyr heroes of Moldavia, who sacrificed themselves for this land and for defending the Christianity and the

nation. This was for Mother Suzanna loved the church and the holy prayer more than anything.

Reconciled with herself and with God, in the year 1925 Schema-Nun Suzanna moved to the eternal resting, age 95, leaving Războieni Monastery with a community of over 50 nuns.

PROTOSYNCELLUS GIDEON GEORGESCU
Abbot of Prodromul Hermitage – Mount Athos
(1840-1925)

This devoted Romanian monk and man of prayer originated form Prahova County. Hearing about numerous "Wallachian" monks living as hermits on Mount Athos, in the year 1865 he went to Prodromul Hermitage where he entered under the obedience to Abbot Nephon Ionescu.

Being humble and obedient, he received the monastic tonsuring and he has been found worthy of the gift of the priesthood. And Pious Gideon was gentle at word, wise, and peaceful. He was serving daily into the church, he was fulfilling his other tasks, and he judged nobody. His most beloved adviser was the Great Chief-Singer Nectareous Creţu, from whom he learnt both the churchly singing and the working of the *Prayer to Jesus*.

For the kindness and for the holiness of his life, in the year 1891, the community of the Prodromul Hermitage elected him abbot and spiritual father. As abbot, Protosyncellus Gideon was a true role-model od monk and of confessor. He was humble, gentle, and merciful in everything. They all were going to the vegetables garden, to fulfill other works, to the church, and to the table. And when a brother asked him for something, a coat, some money, a shirt, he gave him even his own coat, only everybody would be content. Under the abbotship of Protosyncellus Gideon Georgescu, Prodromul Hermitage experienced a flourishing epoque. The community counted 150 Romanian monks and they had a school for churchly music renowned all over Mount Athos, chosen confessors, and churchly religious services which conquered everybody. There were coming monks from all over Mount Athos to hear Schemamonk Nectareous and his disciples singing.

In the year 1900, Ftaher Gideon withdrew from abbotship and from inside the enclosure of the hermitage and he settled himself down in a small monastic cell, by the sea shore. There he lives for 35 more years, alone with God, with the *Book of Psalms*, with the *Prayer to Jesus*, and with the comforting of the Holy Ghost. That was because he saw some division within community and he didn't want to renounce to the sweetness of the quietude.

Then, feeling his end near, he urged everybody to love and union and he moved, peacefully, into the resting of Christ.

NUN XENIA VELISARIE
Agafton Monastery
(1852-1926)[317]

Mother Xenia Velisarie was a blessed flower in the community of Agafton Monastery. She originated from Ipoteşti. Her mother was sister of the mother of Poet Mihai Eminescu, and of mothers Fevronia, Sophia, and Olimpiada Iurașcu from Agafton. While the child was ten years old, Schema-Nun Fevronia came from the monastery and told to her mother:

- Sister, you are poor and you have many children. Give your daughter to us to raise her, to make a nun of her, so that she will pray to God for you and she will be your inheritor in the monastery.

- Gladly, Mother Fevronia, I am giving you this elder daughter!

So, Mother Xenia reached into monastery. There she was raised with much care in the house of her aunties, learning, from her childhood, the obedience, the humbleness, the churchly singing, and the holy prayer. When mature, she became the bride of Christ and she was praising God, day and night. Her disciples said that Mother Xenia was, from her childhood, a silent, daughter, withdrawn and living-of quietude. She was praying much, she was always fasting, and she had the gift of the tears.

So loved Mother Xenia in ascesis, for 60 years, in Agafton Monastery, extolling God and praying for people. In the summer of the year 1926 she passed away, peacefully, and she was buried in the monastery's cemetery.

NUN EPRAXIA DEMI
Agapia Monastery
(1832-1926)

This worthy of being remembered Abbot of Agapia Monastery originated from Tighina area. Coming to the monastery when she was a child, she was raised in the love for Christ and in the zeal for the spiritual things. Then she received the tonsuring in monasticism, and she lived in ascesis for tens of years, in full humbleness, in obedience, and in prayer.

In the year 1904, Mother Epraxia was chosen Abbot of Agapia Monastery, which she led with gentleness and with wisdom for four years. By her zeal, they restored entirely the church and the enclosure, destroyed by the fire from the year 1903. In the year 1912, Mother Epraxia Demi was elected abbot for the second time, and she led Agapia Monastery with a special wisdom for 14 more years, renewing the spiritual life and increasing the number of the community up to 500 nuns. She valuated the most the prayer and the moral life. She never allowed the nuns to receive laypeople in their monastic cells, nor they to walk

[317] According to the testimonies of Mothers Anna Moisa and Euphrosyne Buazelea from Slatina Monastery – Suceava County.

within the enclosure without wearing their monastic coat and having a decent countenance. And she neither allowed them to wear expensive clothing, in order not to offend somebody.

Once she saw a nun coming to the church dressed up in expensive clothes. So, she called that nun to her and told her:

- Tell me, mother, which saint have you dressed yourself for? Don't you know how grave if the sin of the offense?

After toiling much for the salvation of everybody, in the year 1926, Mother Epraxia withdrew from abbotship again. Then, after living a little more, she passed away peacefully.

PROTOSYNCELLUS PORPHYRY BUCURESCU
Frăsinei Monastery – Vîlcea County
(1862-1927)

This chosen Abbot of Frăsinei Monastery was born in Domneşti Commune - Argeş County. When he was 12 years old, a hieromonk crossed through his village and seeing there many children he asked them:

- Who wants to go to monastery?

- I want to become a monk! answered one child. His name was Peter. He was the future Abbot Porphyry.

After a few days the child was brought to Frăsinei Monastery and entrusted to a skilled teacher, Hieromonk Laurentius. That teacher taught him how to read and how to write and all the good rules, and at the age of 20 he tonsured him in monasticism under the name Porphyry. The abbot, seeing his obedience, he ordained him priest and appointed him ecclesiarch.

In the year 1905, Abbot Sylvester passed away and the community elected Father Porphyry as Abbot. And he led Frăsinei Monastery for 22 years, keeping, thoroughly the rules set up there by Saint Calinic. Under Abbot Porphyry Frăsinei Monastery reached to be the most famous hermitage from the country, counting up to 60 fathers and brothers. The rule of that hermitage was this: the monks attended all the churchly religious services. The tasks were performed in perfect silence, permanently united with the *Prayer to Jesus*. They ate communally. Each one helped himself, with restraint, as much as he needed. The monastic cells, the kitchen, and the church were never locked. The fathers zealously read the holy books, they regularly fulfilled their rule of prayer and their canon in the monastic cells, fasting and praying as much as they could.

On day, Abbot Porphyry saw a brother having his soul troubled, and he asked him:

- Brother, have you done your canon and the praying rule this morning?

- No, father abbot. I haven't had time to do them.

- That's why you are troubled! Leave your task and go to your monastic cell. After finishing your praying rule and your canon, you will come back to fulfill your task.

After an hour, that brother turned back from his monastic cell having a glad and peaceful face.

Another brother was fickle. He constantly came and leave from monastery. Once he asked the abbot:

- I wonder why am I unable to stay into monastery?

- That is because you have never confessed your sins as it should! the abbot answered him. Lo, I am exonerating you, for three days, of any task. Prepare yourself and confess your sins openly, and all your thoughts will be appeased.

Truly so, after confession that brother was delivered from the passion of the fickleness.

Also, Abbot Porphyry didn't allow the monks to live in an ascesis that exceeded their powers, or to withdraw themselves alone into wilderness. One day, a brother asked him for permission to go and live in ascesis in the forest. And the Abbot told him:

- Brother John, I don't give you my blessing for you to go into wilderness. There are many temptations. Remain into community, here is your place.

But that brother left, secretly. After a few months, when he finished the food, he had brought with him when he had left, he wanted to descend back to the monastery. But because the path was snowy, he slipped and fell into a precipice and there he died. Lo where the disobedience leads one to!

Abbot Porphyry toiled much for the salvation of his spiritual sons, and in the autumn of the year 1927, feeling his end near, he blessed everyone and he passed away, peacefully.

HIERARCH VALERIAN ŞTEFĂNESCU
Roman Bishopric
(1825-1928)[318]

The humble Hierarch Valerian Ştefănescu was a venerable hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church from the Centuty XX. He was one of the sons of priest Peter Ştefănescu and of his wife, Presbyter Anastasia, from Grîcina Commune – Neamţ County. A house blessed by God with many children, of which five took the road of the monasticism and they reached to be advanced monks into good deeds.

The first among them was Bishop Melchizedek (1822-1992), a great scholar and a worthy hierarch of Roman Bishopric. The second was Hierarch Valerian (1825-1928). The third brother was Archimandrite Jeronimo (1832-1906) who was great ecclesiarch at Roman Bishopric. And among the sisters

[318] Bishop Gerontius Nicolau, *Melchizedek*, Ceraica Monastery, 1939.

were: Nun Eugenie (1821-1889) who was great ecclesiarch at Văratec Monastery, and Nun Suzanna (1830-1925) who was Abbot at Războieni Monastery – Neamţ County. At a n old age, Priest Peter himself became a monk at Bisericani Monastery, under the name Pachomius.

Archimandrite Valerian – Basil, according to his baptism name – attended, in his youth, the Socola Seminary from Iaşi. In the year 1850 he was ordained parishioner priest and functioned as chief-priest at Bacău and Roman for 19 years.

Remaining widow, in the year 1875 he embraced the monastic life, and in the year 1879 he was ordained vicar hierarch for Rîmnicu-Vîlcea. After leading, for a while, the Printing Press of the Church Books, in the year 1890 he withdrew himself to Roman Bishopric as vicar hierarch, where he remained, peacefully, until the end of his life.

This gentle hierarch was a true shepherd of the flock of Christ and a devoted servant of the altar. His best good deeds which he was crowned with, they were these ones: the consummate humbleness, the non-earning, and a profound love for church, for the holy religious services, and for people.

He was permanently wearing simple clothes and vestments, so that he didn't differ from others. He was sweet at word and gentle in heart, he was talking to everybody and he was reconciling everybody, and he never missed the church's religious services, and he shared to the widows and to the poor people, everything he earned, even his pension. They said about him that, after WWI, he was going, together with his deacon, to consecrate new churches which replaced the old destroyed churches, especially in Bacău and Vrancea Countries. He was tarrying for months, walking form village to village, comforting the discouraged people, sanctifying the altars and examining the priests. And he was sharing the all gifts which he was receiving to the war widows and he turned back to bishopric only with his walking staff.

We owe also to mention here the care he took for the small children. Out of his funds, and also out of Bishop Melchizedek funds, he bought a garden near to Bishopric and there he built a school with two classrooms, for educating people. That was the first kindergarten from Roman City, subsidized by the two founders. On a daily basis, there were coming students for advice and for help, and the good shepherd received all of them and helped them, with love.

This forever-remembered Hierarch loved the Church as itself the bride of Christ. He didn't miss the Holy Liturgy, the Vespers, or the Matins. At night he was the first to wake up, he took his staff and the tarries in front of the cathedral until the ecclesiarch opened the door. If the established hour had passed and the servants were late, Hierarch Valerian gave the blessing and he served the religious service of the Midnight Office, by heart. And after the opened the church, the old man told them:

- Read from the Matins' psalms further, for I have uttered the Midnight Office at the church's door!

But the holiest mission had by Hierarch Valerian was that of ordaining the candidates to priesthood and preparing them for shepherding. He was ordaining new priests on a weekly basis, and then he was teaching them the rule of the religious services for 40 days. With a rarely seen kindness and skilfulness, the gentle hierarch was educating the servants of the holy altars, especially accustoming them to the fear of God, to the love for church, and to the mercy on people.

So lived in ascesis the venerable hierarch Valerian Ştefănescu, for 103 years, being honored by children, by young people, and by elderly people, by monks and by laypeople, as a patriarch and as a father of everybody. He was a true blessing to the Roman Bishopric, and for the hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

In the summer of the year 1928, Hierarch Valerian passed away peacefully, yielding his soul in the hands of the Great Hierarch Jesus Christ. His body was placed in a small chapel in the middle of the garden, next to his brother, Bishop Melchizedek, near to the kindergarten founded by them. Above the tomb these words are written:

"Under this stone rests the humble servant of God: Hierarch Valerian Ştefănescu – of Craiova.

Dead on 8th of March 1928, after a life of over one hundred years, fruitful in good deeds.

Eternal remembrance!".

HIEROSCHEMAMONK ELIJAH VULPE
Great Confessor of the Athonite Fathers
(1851-1928)

This pious father originated form Orhei County. His parents, Elijah and Melania provided him with a totally special education. In the year 1879 he had gone to the Holy Mountain and there he became a monk at the Romanian Hermitage Lacu. Seeing the fathers form there his zeal and wisdom, in the year 1881 he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, and he was officiating the religious services with a great faith and with fear of God. In the year 1894 he bought the monastic cell consecrated to Saint John the Baptist, at the place called Colciu, on the estate of Vatopedi Monastery.

So, after renewing that monastic cell, he gathered around himself five chosen disciples, namely: Efthimios, Andrew, Paisius, Gherasim, and Hieromonk John Guţu, forming together a famous spiritual family. And the ascesis of Father Hieroschemamonk Elijah was the silence and the ceaseless prayer, he being a famous worker of the *Prayer of the Heart*. Then he was also officiating with much piousness, the praying program of the church and the *Holy Liturgy*, and when he was officiating, he only had the Holy Impartation and the wafer, not eating other food but on Saturdays and on Sundays. When

he was not officiating the holy religious services, he ate once a day, except on Wednesdays and on Fridays when he ate nothing. Also, he was sleeping very little, and he was daily reading the Holy Scripture and the Words of the Holy Fathers.

For his humbleness and ascesis, the gift of the Holy Ghost and the godlike love rested abundantly within the heart of this father. Truly, Hieroschemamonk Elijah Vulpe was the father of the love and of the gentleness, famous all over Mount Athos. This was because he was very welcoming, merciful, without evilness as a child, and wise at word.

For 30 years Father Elijah was one of the most skilled confessors of Mount Athos, advising and guiding on the salvation path hundreds of spiritual sons: Romanian, Greeks, Russians, Bulgarians, and Serbians. All of them were searching for him and benefiting of his words. And if he saw somebody being embarrassed, he immediately encouraged him, by telling him:

- Dare, my son, for I too am a sinner! Thus, he gained many souls on the path to salvation.

He often advised his disciples, telling them:

- My sons, let's not forget that we are on the Holy Mountain, where the Mother of the Lord has called us to work the good deed. Let's ceaselessly pray to God for the salvation of the world and of the entire Christian nation.

On some other occasions he told them:

- Fathers, let's not forget that word form *Paterikon* uttered by Abba Lot: "You won't be able to become a monk if you are not like the fire! So, let our heart burn for the love for Christ".

Once, a monk came to confess his sins to him and told him:

- Father, give me the blessing for I to become insane for Christ!

And the old man answered him smiling:

- It is not enough to you how insane you already are? Do you want to be even more insane?

So, that monk was ashamed and prostrated before him and told him:

- Forgive me, father, for I have been wrong! And him, after kissing him, he let him go in peace.

So lived Pious Hieroschemamonk Elijah Vulpe in ascesis, for 50 years, at the Holy Mountain, extolling God, day and night, and raising his spiritual sons. Then, seeing his end near, he blessed everybody and passed away, peacefully, on 8th of December 1928, being mourned by numerous Athonite monks.

HIERODEACON CHRISTOPHER THE HERMIT
Sihla Hermitage
(1930)

- A Very Useful Story -

Between the year 1930-1933 a hierodeacon called Christopher was living in ascesis in the forests form around Sihla. He firstly became a monk at Frăsinei Monastery. Being student at theology, in each summer vacation he withdrew himself at Sihla and he was living alone, in ascesis, in that mountain, in a small shack form the forest, at a distance of about 1 kilometer from the hermitage. At that time there were numerous hermit monks on Sihla Mountains.

Once, two brothers – Basil and Constantine (Cleophas) Elijah - were herding their sheep through those virgin forests. One of them noticed a hermit's shack and he gently knocked on the door:

- Bless me, father!

But nobody answered him. Then he opened the door and saw inside a small chamber under a sandstone rock. On the floor was fir branches and on some kind of a table there was a *Book of Hours* and on it a piece of paper on which was written: "Here dwells the worm of the earth, D. C.". Then, one of the brothers said:

- How many hidden servants Christ has in these forests! If we knew who he was, we would bring him some food from the sheepfold.

Then he closed the door and they left, following the flock.

A few days later, on an evening, a stranger father arrived at the monastery's sheepfold. He was skinny, he was tall, and he was carrying something on his back.

- Brothers, he said, I've been knowing you since you passed by my monastic cell, herding your sheep. I saw you from the thicket of the forest. I am "the worm of the earth, hierodeacon Christopher"!

- But what do you carry in that bag and why does it have the sign of the cross of it? the brothers asked him.

- It is the skull of a saint. Lead me to the monastery, to the abbot, in order I to unveil him this mystery.

So, they led him to Protosyncellus Ioanichie Moroi, the Abbot of Hihăstria Monastery, and Hierodeacon Christopher told him the followings:

- This summer, on Saint Elijah's day, after I had officiated the Holy Liturgy at Sihla, I was turning back to my shack in the forest. On the way, because I was tired, I slept for a little while in a glade. Suddenly, an unseen hand turned my head towards the place where my feet were. I reckoned that as some devilish hallucination. I marked myself with the sign of the cross and I went back to sleep. Then, the same hand woke me up again. Then, at the height of the fir trees, I saw a very pious monk. He was wearing a baize monastic coat, bareheaded, having his white hair flowing down on his

shoulders, having his beard fit, having an enlightened face, and holding the wooden rosary in his hand. So, he told me with a serene voice:

- Do not fear, Father Christopher. I am a humble servant of Christ, and I had been living here in a deep ascesis, for many years, unknown to anybody, and here I passed away. By my bones remained unburied. Take my skull with you, for blessing, and wear it with you for the whole your life, wherever you will go, for it will be very useful to you. But do not dare to take my bones as well, rather bury them in the ground!

After that pious disappeared from my sight, continued saying Hierodeacon Christopher, I firstly prayer in order that not to be some hallucination from the devil. Then a felt a great spiritual joy. Then I uttered the *Creed* and I counted a hundred steps to the right. Suddenly, I found, under a carved rock, the bones of that great pious. They were yellow as beeswax and spreading a good fragrance. I marked myself with the sign of the cross, and I started fulfilling the commandment. But my though was tempting me to take all the bones with me. So, I laid my coat on the ground, but, oh wonder! Each time my fingers touched those bones they became hot in my hand, so that they were burning my fingers. Then, one by one, the bones were disappearing into the ground. Then, I asked the saint for forgiveness because I transgressed his commandment, and I took with me only his skull, and I turned back to my shack.

Since that day I've been carrying the skull of the pious with me, everywhere I go, and by his prayers I've been delivered of any temptation or danger.

- Father Christopher, the Abbot asked him, do you know the name of this Pious?

- I hadn't known his name for a long time. So that I prayed to God, with tears, in order God to unveil me the name of the Pious. And one night, as I was officiating the Matins inside my shack, suddenly that wonderful Pious appeared to me and told me:

- Father Christopher, do not be troubled because of not knowing my name. I am Hieroschemamonk Paul. Remember me at the holy prayers! – and he disappeared immediately.

- Yes, that one was the confessor of Saint Mother Theodora from Sihla – said the Abbot of the Hihăstria Monastery. He lived at Hihăstria Hermitage around the end of the Century XVII. Then he withdrew himself in the wilderness and died there.

So, Hierodeacon Christopher tarried for three days at Hihăstria Monastery, officiating daily the Holy Liturgy together with Protosyncellus Ioanichie Moroi, and during those days the skull of Pious Hieroschemamonk Paul was permanently on the Holy Table, from where was being spread a good spiritual fragrance throughout all the church. Then, the fathers kissed goodbye that holy skull, and Hierodeacon Christopher placed it again in his bag, that had on it the sign of the Holy Cross, and he left for Sihla. Since that day nobody has met Hierodeacon Christopher again. It was believed that he

withdrew himself in the deep of the forest from Sihla Mountains and he passed away there, extolling God.

The fathers form Sihla vainly tried to find at least his bag. Nobody was able to find it. The local tradition tells us about the fact that between Sihla Hermitage and the Precipice of Coroi from nearby, there is a place hidden by God which nobody can discover it. During centuries, there have been living in ascesis, many holy hermits. Maybe Father Christopher passed away there, having the skull of Pious Paul in his arms!

RASOPHORE BASIL ELIJAH
Hihăstria Monastery
(1902-1931)

a. His Life

This humble rasophore was an unmatched ascetic in the community of Hihăstria Monastery. He was born to a family blessed with many children, in Suliţa Commune – Botoşani County. His parents, Alexander and Ana Elijah were breeding cattle. Out of tens children of theirs, five chose the monastic life.

Rasophore Basil Elijah came to Hihăstria Monastery in the year 1929, together with two younger brothers of his, Gheorghe and Constantine. For three years as he lived there, he was shepherding the monastery's sheep, being to everybody and example of love, of prayer, and of obedience.

In the spring of the year 1931 he moved from this life to the without-sunset resting.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Rasophore Basil was a shepherd of sheep from his childhood. Before he came to Hihăstria Monastery, he lived in ascesis, for a while, at Cozancea Hermitage - Botoşani County. There too he had the same task. But, for his high life, the enemy led him in many temptations. One night, while he was reading the *Book of Psalms*, the devil appeared to him in the countenance of a bird that struck the fire and so the embers were scattered and the sheepfold and the sheep were set in fire. On some other occasions, the devil scattered the flock or entered the dogs and killed them. This was because the enemy couldn't bear the fire of his prayer. But the young soldier didn't fear the traps of the devil and he never allowed his mind to scatter during prayer.

2. When Rasophore Basil Elijah came to Hihăstria Monastery, together with his brothers Gheorghe and Constantine, the were firstly tested by the Abbot. They were kept for three days outside the monastery's gate, in fasting and in prayer, in order to tempt the strength of their faith. They were asked to strike the trunk of a tree for the whole day, and talking to nobody. On the evening, the steward of the monastery came and asked them:

- Tell me, brothers, has the tree said anything?

- No, it hasn't – they answered.

- Is the tree hungry"

- No! – the brothers said.

- Lo, this is how the monk must endure in the monastery! Then the steward left without giving them any food. The steward did the same the next evening as well.

On the third day the steward came and took the brothers to the church. After they bowed down there, the Abbot blessed them and took their confessions of sins since childhood, he gave them food in the refectory, and on the second day he found them worthy of being administrated the Body and the Blood of the lord. Then he gave them monastic cells and appointed them individual tasks.

3. For three years, Rasophore Basil Elijah lived at the monastery's sheepfold. And he was so gentle and full of love that everybody loved him, even the sheep, the dogs, and the birds of the sky. And his ascesis was this: he ate once a day, in the afternoon, around three o-clock. He knew the *Book of Psalms* and the *Seven Praises* by heart, and he uttered them daily as herding the sheep bareheaded. At nigh he was doing five hundred prostrations and he was reading the *Lived of the saints*, always cogitating at the judgments of the Lord.

4. Another ascetic say of this loving-of Christ soul was that of taking care of the hermits form the forest. At that time, around Hihăstria Monastery and around Sihla Hermitage, there were living over 30 monks and nuns as hermits. Brother Basil Elijah was the friend of the hermits. When he encountered someone of them through the forest, even if he didn't know that hermit, he prostrated himself before that hermit and told him:

- Bless me, father, and pray for me, the sinner! Do you need some food form the sheepfold?

If the hermit had accepted, on the next day Brother Basil brought him cheese, potatoes, vegetables, salt, and flour. And he had numerous hermits whom he knew and whom he visited at their monastic cells.

5. Once he asked a hermit:

- Father, what should I do so that I will be saved?

- Brother, the old man answered him, pray always, be obedient with love, and be humble. If you keep these three, you will surely be saved.

6. In the autumn of the year 1930, Rasophore Basil was shepherding the sheep, together with his brother Constantine, on the Sihla Mountain. As they were there, a wonderful and saint hermit passed by, Hierarch John, accompanied by his deacon. After he blessed both of them, the Bishop, being fore-seer, he told to the youngest brother:

- Brother Constantine, tell to you brother Basil to prepare himself and to go farther, for he has a long trip ahead of him!

The brothers didn't understand back then the words of that holy hermit, but six months later Brother Basil went towards Christ on that long and without turning back road.

7. In the spring of the year 1931, this humble obedient got sick and he was taken to monastery. Once, as he was praying in front of the church's door,

he had a fearsome vision. He started crying because of fear, and shouting out with a loud voice:

- All-Holy Birth Giver of God, have mercy on me! And to the fathers who gathered around him he told:

- Bow down, fathers, bow down, for, low, our Masters have come! The Mother of the lord with our Savior in Her arms are present! Lo, She is above us!

- Brother Basil, why have you shouted out so loudly? – he was asked by the monks.

- Fathers, when I was paying in front of the church's door, suddenly there appeared a gang of very fierce devils having fire staffs in their hands, and they started beating me dreadfully and shouting out at me: "You are vainly praying, for you haven't been saved. You belong to us because you are a sinner!".

Then I started shouting out, with hope, at the Mother of the Lord. On that very moment a white cloud, full of light, descended form heavens, above the church. And in that cloud, I saw the Mother of the Lord with our savior in Her arms, telling me:

- Do not fear, for by the third day from now, you will come to us! Then the Savior blessed all of us and they ascended to heavens... Fathers, great power and daring has the Mother of the Lord before our savior Jesus Christ, and He listens to Her prayers very much!

8. After that, the Abbot told him:

- Brother Basil, beware not to be deceived by the enemy's traps. Take heed at yourself and guard your mind, for his traps are many. Then he told to the other brothers:

- If after those three days Brother Basil will leave us, then truly, the Mother of the lord showed Herself to him. And if not, he has been deceived by the devil.

Three days later, exactly at the same hour, Rasophore Basil Elijah passed away, peacefully, with the prayer on his lips.

Who knows how many hermits were praying, at that time, for the resting of his soul!

MONK GHERASIM ELIJAH
Hihăstria Monastery
(1904-1933)[319]

a. His Life

He was natural brother of Rasophore Basil Elijah, born in the same family from Suliţa Commune – Botoşani County. Burning for the love for Christ, in the year 1926 he entered the monastic ascesis at Cozancea –

[319] Rasophore Basil and Monk Gherasim were natural brothers of Archimandrite Cleophas Elijah.

Botoşani Hermitage. There he was, for two years, the disciple of a spiritually advanced hermit – Schemamonk Paisius Olaru.

He was natural brother of Rasophore Basil Elijah, born in the same family from Suliţa Commune – Botoşani County. Burning for the love for Christ, in the year 1926 he entered the monastic ascesis at Cozancea – Botoşani Hermitage. There he was, for two years, the disciple of a spiritually advanced hermit – Schemamonk Paisius Olaru.

After a rarely encountered ascesis, Monk Gherasim Elijah – this son of the obedience and of the sleepless prayer – yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord, in the summer of the year 1933.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. While he was a disciple of Schemamonk Paisius at Cozancea Hermitage, the old man sent him to a task. But brother Gheorghe, following the advice of his own mind entered the monastic cell and left on the table the following letter: „Forgive me, Father Paisius, because I have left for the forest, for five days, in order to repent myself". Later on, the old man read that letter and said: „This thing is from the temptation from the devil and it won't be beneficial to him, because of being without blessing!".

At midnight somebody knocked on the door of the monastic cell of Father Paisius!

- Bless me father, and forgive me the sinner!

- Who are you? the old man asked him.

- I am brother Gheorghe, the sinner.

- And how this can be? Brother Gheorghe has left for the forest to repent himself, for five days!

- Forgive me, father, because I have been wrong!

- Mai God forgive you, brother. Come in and tell me what has happened to you.

- I have been for a long time wanting to pray alone, for a few days. So, I have taken the *Book of Hours* with me and I have hidden myself in the forest, in a pit. There I've started doing prostrations and praying with tears. At midnight I have heard next to me a fearsome voice: "What are you doing here?". I have turned and I have seen a giant with a fearsome face. It had been the enemy. Then, because I have been afraid, I have taken my *Book of Hours* and I've run here to the monastic cell.

Since that moment, the disciple didn't do anything without blessing.

2. After receiving the monastic countenance, Father Gherasim has multiplied his ascesis. He was daily repeating the *Book of Psalms* and the *Seven Prayers* which he knew by heart, and at night he was doing hundreds of prostrations while uttering the *Prayer to Jesus*. He was a very secretly ascetic soul and he had a great piousness towards the Mother of the Lord. He spoke only a little and he had the gift of the tears.

3. Father Gherasim always wore with him the icon of the Mother of the Lord. He was wrapping it in a clean towel, he placed it in his bag, next to the *Lives of the Saints*, and he left for shepherding the sheep. In the forest, he was hanging the icon on the trunk of a beech, he read the entire Akathist of the Good Annunciation, and he was doing prostrations.

Once, as he was praying, he started to weep loudly, in front of the icon of the Mother of the Lord. A forest ranger happened to pass by and asked him:

- What has happened to you, father, that you cry so bitterly?

- I have hit my leg.

- It will pass from you, brother.

- May God help me and heal me!

4. This young soldier of Christ had also another secret ascesis. He was always cogitating at death and at the time of the fearsome judgment. When he heard about a father who was gravely ill, paid him a visit, he comforted him, he prayer for him, he read to him from the holy books, and then he shed tears.

- What are you crying for, Father Gherasim? the sick man asked him.

- Because my time of death is coming closer to me, and I haven't prepared myself yet!

5. Monk Gherasim often went at night to the cemetery and there he was praying alone and crying. In in his monastic cell he placed, instead of a bed, a coffin, which he was lying himself down in, for a few hours.

One day a father told him:

- You are going to change many worn out coffins before that which you will be buried with!

- I have faith in the good God – he answered him – that this coffin will be my house forever!

After a short while his word was fulfilled.

6. In the spring of the year 1933, the Abbot of the Monastery bought a few hectares of land near Tîrgu-Neamţ, for the needs of the community. Hearing about that, Monk Gherasim sighed and told to everybody:

- Fathers, from now on, the quietude and the spiritual peace of the monks form our monastery have gone away.

A year later and everybody said:

- Father Ghrerasim was quite right!

7. Once Father Gherasim got ill and the Abbot told him:

- Do you want us to bring a doctor so that you to be healed?

And Father Gherasim answered in tears:

- Forgive me, fathers, for I have prayed to God to give me trouble and sickness, only that I be saved. So, if God has had mercy on me, how could I oppose Him? Let me at the hand and at the will of God, for this illness is towards my salvation.

8. Being sick, Father Gherasim was no longer able to serve in the church. But he didn't miss the Holy Liturgy. He told, either in the pew, or on the ground, leaning against a pillow.

- Father Gherasim, the others told him, why don't you stay in your monastic cell until you will get better?

- Fathers, forgive me, the sinner, for I have come to listen to the Holy Liturgy. This one might be the last one in my life. For there's no other religious service more necessary for our salvation than the Holy Liturgy.

9. One day an old monk died. Then Father Gherasim told towards everybody, with tears:

- You know, fathers, that after Father Basil it's my turn to leave this world.

Rightly so, on 14th of September 1933, the much-patient Gherasim Elijah yielded his soul in the hands of Christ, lying in the coffin made by himself. Under his pillow it was found this letter, addressed to his younger brother, who was to become, later on, Archimandrite Cleophas:

"My beloved Constantine,

I want you to know that God will keep you for longer in this life. So, I pray you not to forget me, the sinner, at your holy prayers. This is for, I too, with many tears, I've been praying to God for you and for all the brothers, so that God to bring you on the path to salvation!".

HIEROSCHEMAMONK BARLAAM VÎNTU
Mount Athos
(1833-1934)[320]

This father was a chosen Athonite ascetic and a renowned confessor. He was the son of believer peasants, originating from Buimăceşti Commune – Botoşani. Wanting to dedicate his life to Christ, he left for Mount Athos at young age, and he became a monk there, at a Romanian monastic cell. After many years of ascesis, Father Barlaam turned back into the country and he remained at Cozancea Hermitage – Botoşani County. There he was ordained priest and he became abbot in the year 1899.

He led the Cozancea Hermitage for 12 years. As a skilled confessor, he raised many disciples in the fear of God, accustoming them to the obedience, to the prayer, and to giving alms. Under his leadership, Cozancea Hermitage experience an epoque of flourishment.

In the year 1912, the old Abbot turned back to Mount Athos to die there. The Romanian Athonite fathers say that, at the same time there was living in ascesis a Moldavian Hieroschemamonk, called Nicholas, at the monastic cell of Saint Nicholas of Iufta, on the land of Pantocrator Monastery. Father Nicholas was very old and had no disciples. He had started the building of a church in the honor of the Great Hierarch Nicholas, but he had no necessary means to finish that building. Being sad about that, he had placed the icon of Saint Hierarch Nicholas in a tree and he was praying, saying:

[320] According to the testimony of Archimandrite Cleophas Elijah, his relative.

- Saint Nicholas, I am old and I can no longer work. Lo, your church remains unfinished. You work great wonders both on the sea and on the land. You gave three purses full of golden coin to the three girls, give me too, some help, to finish your church!

While the old man was praying with tears, Father Barlaam arrived to Athos. So, remaining there, he finished the church consecrated to Saint Nicholas and he gathered there a few good disciples. In the year 1934, Hieroschemamonk Barlaam passed away, with a reconciled soul, and he was buried next to the church, next to his spiritual father.

MONK HILARY IONICĂ
Sihăstria Monastery
(† 1934)

a. His Life

Father Hilary was a very loving-of God monk, who dedicated himself, since his childhood, to the Mother of the Lord. He originated from Ravoca Commune – Bacău County. In his youth he had been married and had children. Then, after he had passed through a dire trial, he left everything and came to Sihăstria Monastery. Abbot Ioanichie Moroi tonsured him in monasticism and appointed him steward and adviser over the brothers. After twenty years of consummate obedience and humbleness, he moved towards the lord, ages 80.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Father Hilary was raft-driver on Bistriţa River. One winter night, while he was turning back, the wolved attacked him on his way home. After fighting them for a couple of hours, he was no longer able to defend himself. So, he fell on his knees and prayer, saying:

- Mother of the Lord, if you save me alive from here, I will leave everything and become a monk.

On that very moment he heard human voices and a sled appeared. The wolves ran away and he was saved and taken to his family. After a few months, he went to Sihăstria Monastery, to serve to Christ.

2. After a year had passed, the devil brough a hard temptation upon him. He had been engulfed by a great sadness and he wanted to leave the monastery. One night he went to the church and there he had been praying and crying. Then he saw that out of the icon of the Mother of the Lord came a decently dressed up woman who, coming close to him, she asked him:

- Why are you crying and why are you troubled, brother John?

- I feel sad here and I would want to leave this monastery!

- Why do you feel sad in my house? Be at peace and do everything with love, for from now on you won't ever be sad! Then, that wonderful woman turned back towards the icon and disappeared. She was the Mother of the Lord.

3. For 20 years, Father Hilary was the steward of Sihăstria Monastery. Each morning, he visited each brother's monastic cell and told them:

- My beloved sons, come to your tasks! Then he left ahead, with the prayer on his lips, and he worked, together with the brothers, for the entire day, being, to everybody, a role-model of humbleness, of gentleness, and of immortal love. On the evening, when he turned back to his monastic cell, the old man bowed down before everybody, telling them:

- Forgive me, fathers, because I might have upset you with something! Then he went to his monastic cell where he was reading the Akathist an the Chappel of the Mother of the Lord.

4. In the spring of the year 1933, Father Hilary went to forest to fetch wood and he broke a leg. Later on, because he got gangrene, the old man was praying with tears, saying:

- Mother of the Lord, do not leave me, because my leg hurts me very harshly!

As he was praying at night, a decent woman entered his monastic cell, having the countenance of a doctress from Tg. Neamț, and asked him:

- Why are you crying Father Hilary?

- Lady, I've broken my leg and it awfully hurts me. I feel that I am going to die, and I am crying for not having repented.

Then, that lady looked at his leg, touched it with her hand, and told him:

- Do not cry, Father Hilary. You will get your leg healed and you will live for one more year from now. And then you will rest.

Then the doctress left and the old man fell asleep. She was the Mother of the Lord. That morning he woke up healed, he came to the church, and he told to everybody the miracle worked by the Mother of the Lord.

So, after living exactly for one more year, on the same day, the Sunday of the banishing from Paradise, he yielded his soul in the arms of the Mother of the Lord, and he was accompanied by everybody, for good bye, at the monastery's cemetery.

NUN MATRONA DOMNARU
Hurezu Monastery
(1852-1935)

She was the daughter of a mountain man originated from Sibiu County. Her father became a monk, later on, at Mount Athos, under the name Nicodemus, and the little child was raised at Sărăcineşti Monastery – Vîlcea.

In the year 1868 she became a nun, and she was sent, as task, to Horezu Monastery. There, Mother Matrona continues her ascesis, in prayer and in humbleness, until the year 1922, when she was elected abbot. She guided the monastery's community for four years, being to everybody a role-model for spiritual kindness.

In the year 1926 he fell gravely ill. After she prayer, with tears, to the Mother of the Lord, she was healed miraculously, and she lived for nine more years after. The mothers said that she never missed from the church, day and night. With a serene face, with the prayer of her lips, and with her walking stick in her hand, she was the first going to the religious service, and she was the last leaving from the church.

In the summer of the year 1935, feeling that her end was drawing close, she summoned her disciples and told them:

- Mother Olimpiada and Mother Gherasima, in three days I will leave this world. The Lord and the Mother of the Lord are summoning me. Please, live in love, in humbleness, and in obedience. Never miss the religious service in the church. Do not gather wealth on earth, either money or clothes, because those separate you form the love for Christ. And I will pray God for the monastery and for your holiness.

On the second day she woke up in the morning, she put on her monastic clothes, and she told to her disciple:

- Read me the Akathist of the Good Annunciation. At the end, Mother Matrona uttered these words of praise in the honor of the Mother of the Lord:

- Rejoice, Bride, forever Virgin!

On that very moment she yielded her ghost.

HIEROSCHEMAMONK GELASIUS MALOVICEANU
Cernica Monastery
(1858-1936)

Pious Hieroschemamonk Gelasius was the greatest confessor and hermit of Cernica Monastery from Century XX. He was born in Malovăţ Commune – Mehedinţi County, and he embraced the monastic life in the community of Saint Hierarch Calinic, in the year 1888. After two years, he received the monastic countenance, and after five more years of obedience he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood. Father Gelasius served the Holy Liturgy with much faith and with tears for 20 years.

Following the ascesis of the hesychastic monks, he chose to live, for the rest of his life, until his death, inside his monastic cell. For 20 more years, this great lover of quietude prayer, day and night, within his monastic cell, and in his heart, unknown to anybody. There he was being administrated the All-Clean Mysteries and the daily food, there he was toiling with the fasting, there he was cogitating at God with tears, and there too he was imparted with the joy of the Holy Ghost, and there too he was receiving the confessions of the sins of the monks and of the laypeople. For his much toil, he was found by God worthy of the gift of the speech and of the comforting, reaching to be the most skilled confessor from Cernica Monastery. Only our Savior knows how many broken souls he comforted, how many burdened consciences he eased, how

many tears and pains he alleviated. Father Gherasim was not harsh when giving canons, if the mans topped committing the sin.

In the summer of the year 1936, a spiritual daughter of him asked him for blessing to go and visit the Lord's Tomb.

- I am blessing you – the old man told to her – to go to Jerusalem and to pray for me as well! You have to know that there you will become a nun, but when you will come back in the country you won't find me alive.

Rightly so, on 7th of May 1936, Pious Gelasius – the Great confessor of Cernica Monastery – he passed away, peacefully, being mourned by the community of the fathers and by his numerous spiritual sons.

Lord, rest Father Gelasius with Your saints!

MONK MINA DIACONESCU
Turnu Monastery
(1856-1936)

This pious monk originated form Berislăveşti Commune – Vîlcea County. In his youth he was married and he had children. Then, after he had made to each one of them a living, he became a monk at Turnu Monastery. There, being enlightened by God, he learnt well the typicon and the churchly singing, so that he reached to be a famous churchly singer at Turnu Monastery.

For 25 years, Father Mina adorned the Church of the Lord and the holy religious services with his songs and with his love. For he never missed, day and night, from the pew, and he was fulfilling, with holiness, his monastic duties. When not in church, he was fulfilling his task at the monastery's mill, in silence and in prayer. Father Mina used to feed the birds of the sky. He put on the porch of his monastic cell, daily, breadcrumbs and grains from the mill, and all sort of forest birds gathered them to be fed. Some of them even ate from his hand. Father Mina was very loved by people and by birds, for his kindness.

In the year 1936, at Palm Day, the old man entered the refectory and, kneeling in front of his abbot, he told him with tears:

- Fathers, forgive me for everything I've done wrong to you, for I am going to go by now! God is summoning me!

- No, Father Mina, you are going to live in order to sing the axion of the Holy Resurrection!

- No, Father Abbot, because God is calling for me. I cannot stay any longer! You all, forgive me, the sinner, and do not forget to remember me at the Holy Liturgy.

So, he left for his monastic cell, and the day after, Father Mina passed away peacefully, with the prayer on his lips. Then, for several weeks, the forest birds were gathering on the porch of his monastic cell and they were chirping there with sadness. From there they flew, as a flock, to the Father Mina's tomb, where the chirped again. Then, after resting on the arms of his cross, they turned back to forest.

SCHEMA-NUN ISIDORA THE HERMIT
Sihla Hermitage – Neamţ
(† 1937)[321]

This zealous nun originated from Neamţ County, and she became a nun at Văratec Monastery. In the year 1900 she withdrew at quietude on Sihla Mountains, at the place called "Coroi's Creek", a place famous for the hermit-like life from there. There, under a tall rock-wall, he made to herself a small monastic cell and a wooden chapel. And Mother Isidora was very loving-of ascesis. For the whole day she was reading the *Book of Psalms*, and at midnight she played the semantron, she rang the bell, and she sang the Matins.

For 37 years, regularly, Mother Isidora had been ringing that bell on Sihla Mountains, waking up to prayer the monks and the hermits from that area. When the fathers heard the bell ringing, they told to one another:

- Come, brother, let's go to Matins. It is midnight. One can heard the bell of Mother Isidora!

The old fathers say that Schema-Nun Isidora suffered, while in wilderness, many temptations from the cunning devils. That was because the devils couldn't endure her fasting, her prayer, and her toiling for Christ. At the beginning they were frightening her with night-hallucinations, with shouting-outs, and with voices. Then they were knocking on the door of her monastic cell during prayer. And later on, because they had seen her strength, they approached her monastic cell and they were shouting out with a bitter anger:

- Crazy Isidora, why have you come here where our place is? Leave this place, if you want to get rid of us!

But Mother Isidora banished them away with the name of Christ and she feared not their voices, for she was full of spiritual daring and manhood. And for the cleanness of her life, she achieved from God the gift of the speech and of the comforting. Many hermits, monks, nuns, and laypeople were hiking that mountain and asked Mother Isidora for advice and for useful word, for all of them reckoned her as a true spiritual mother of theirs.

Once, a brother from Sihla Monastery passed by her monastic cell, while shepherding the sheep, and saw her sitting on the porch, and told her:

- Bless me, Mother Isidora!

And the old lady kissed her on his forehead, and answered him:

- May God strengthen you to serve to the Lord until you will be placed in your tomb! Then she invited him in her monastic cell and fed him with bread and forest fruits, and she added many spiritual teachings and after that she let him go in peace.

[321] According to the testimony of Archimandrite Cleophas Elijah and of other old fathers from Sihăstria Monastery.

So lived Schema-Nun Isidora for almost 40 years, in hermit-like ascesis. Then, feeling her end close, in the year 1937she withdrew to Văratec Monastery and there she yielded her soul in the hands of the Lord.

NUN MELITINA BEU
Văratec Monastery
(1860-1938)

Mother Melitina was born in Sălişte Commune – Sibiu County. In her youth she was married and had 7 children. Among those, two boys and two girls embraced the monastic life.

The first girl to leave her parental house was her elder daughter, Parascheva. Entering the community of Văratec Monastery, she became a nun in the year 1902, under the name Pangratia. The second daughter came to Văratec in the year 1915 and became a nun under the name Lavrentia. Between the years 1915-1918 two of her sons, Nicholas and John, entered the community of Neamţ Monastery; the first one received the name Nectareous, and the second one Josaphat. Later on, both brothers were found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, reaching to be good servants of the altar and famous singers.

In the year 1918, their good mother too, of the four monks and nuns, she took upon herself the yoke of Christ, namely Mary Beu, becoming a nun next to her daughters, in Văratec Monastery, under the name Melitina. And Mother Melitina lived in humbleness for twenty years in Văratec Monastery, surpassing many nuns from there with her patience, with her gentleness, and with her zeal for the spiritual things. She was always talking to God and she was fulfilling her tasks in silence. And she never missed from the church. She was the foirt to come to prayer, and she was doing many prostrations on the porch until the church's door was opened.

In the spring of the year 1938 Mother Melitina Beu – this venerable mother and nun – passed away peacefully, yielding her soul in the hand of the Lord.

Mother Pangratia too reached to be a good nun and an unmatched singer in the community of Văratec Monastery. Likewise did her sister, Lavrentia. They they too moved from this life – the first one in the year 1953, and the second one in the year 1967 – and they were placed next to the tomb of their mother Melitina. In the year 1969 moved to Christ Protosyncellus Nectareous Beu, in Bistriţa Monastery – Neamţ County. And in the year 1974, the last son Hieromonk Iosaphat passed away, as hermit in the forests from around Sălişte.

So lived and sacrificed themselves for Christ, Mother Melitina and her sons Nectareous and Iosaphat and her daughters Pangratia and Lavrentia.

May God count them among the group of the saints!

NUN DOMNICA DUMITRESCU
Nămăeşti Monastery – Muscel County
(1858-1938)

Mother Domnica Dumitrescu is remembered by her disciples as a worthy abbot of Nămăeşti Monastery. She originated from Tîrgovişte, and she entered the monastic ascesis at a young age.

For 30 years she was disciple of the previous mother abbot, Nun Glafira Antoniu, proving much obedience and gentleness. In the year 1907, when the former abbot died, Mother Domnica Dumitrescu was chosen as abbot. She led Nămăeşti Monastery for 31 years, toiling day and night for the benefit of the community and for the salvation of her spiritual daughters. Mother Domnica strived much for restoring the church and the monastic cells burnt during WWI. Then she gathered several disciples whom she raised and taught the fear of God, for she was full of wisdom. If one of them had suffered a temptation, she immediately told her:

- Sister, when you commit a sin, rebuke yourself and not somebody else, so that you could have more peace.

On some other occasion she said:

- Through sin the grace of God is removed. And the jokes, though they do not remove the grace, they impede you from advancing spiritually.

If there had happened some misunderstanding among her disciples, she advised each of them, telling them:

- Force yourself, sister, with all the powers of your souls, to find the guilt within your heart, in order you to never hate anybody. This is because, on him who hates, the Gospel places him among the killers of people. Protect us, Lord, against this condemnation!

In the year 1938, Abbot Domnica passed away peacefully, ages 80.

MONK HILARY RADU
Metropolitan Cathedral - Iaşi
(1871-1938)

Father Hilary Radu reached to be known all over Moldavia for his great mercy. He originated form Dobreni Commune – Neamţ County, and he became a monk at Neamţ Monastery. There he learnt how to pray, how to love the people, and how to serve, faithfully, the Church of Christ.

In the year 1901 he was appointed to be church-steward to the Metropolitan Cathedral from Iaşi. It was the holiest task for Father Hilary. He didn't know how to sing, and he wasn't highly literate. But she knew how to adorn the Church of the Lord like a bride. He knew how to light up the candles, how to place flowers at the icons, how to keep the order and the cleanness in the cathedral. She knew better than anybody how to play the semantron and

ho to ring the bells, calling the people to the church. For thirsty-five years, Father Hilary fulfilled that task with consummate love, so that he was known to everybody.

The second great good deed of this humble father was his philanthropy. For he loved the poor people very much, and the travelers, and the orphans, Father Hilary put his soul, his monastic cell, his daily bread, and his salary for the benefit of and for comforting the people. His holiness reckoned everybody as sons of Christ and as his brothers.

For 35 years, this humble monk was host and spiritual father to several poor students from Iaşi. Day by day, and year by year, Father Hilary accommodated, for free, in his monastic cell, up to 10-20 students who didn't have the money for paying for a rent. He fed them with love, he offered them a bed to sleep, he advised them regarding the useful things, he gave them money for buying books, he woke them up in the morning, he put them to prayer, and then he sent them to school. Hundreds of students attended the school and the university and they reached to be medics, professors, and engineers, by the help of the merciful Hilary. For that he was the most loved and searched for among the Cathedral's fathers.

In the year 1936, Father Hilary Radu, the father of the poor and orphan students, withdrew himself to the infirmary of the Neamț Monastery. Two years later, he moved to the resting of Christ, in order to receive the payment for his toils. As sign of gratitude, the professors and the intellectuals supported by him, placed a commemorative banner, on the wall of his monastic cell, which can be seen even today[322]:

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will find mercy" (Matthew 5: 7).

MONK STEPHEN THE HERMIT
Saint Sava Monastery – Bethlehem
(† 1939)

Father Stephen originated form Dobrogea, a southern Romanian province. In his youth he had lived din ascesis at Coco Monastery, and in the year 1920 he left for the Tomb of the Lord and he remained at Saint Sava Monastery.

There he lived in a deep ascesis and he spent 20 years in obedience, until he moved away from this life. For years he was gatekeeper, and then cook, and then steward. He was working, for the whole day, in silence, while having the *Prayer to Jesus* within his heart and in his mind. The fathers who knew him said that he never left the monastery for six years.

At an old age, when he longed for his country, he hiked to the monastery's tower, situated one kilometer distance from the monastery, where the pilgrims were accommodated. After talking to the Romanian worshippers,

[322] Protosyncellus Basil Vasilache, *Monk Hilary – a benefactor*. Neamț Monastery, 1938.

he kissed them on their foreheads, he turned back to his monastic cell, and there he continued his prayer.

In the summer of the year 1939, Father Stephen got sick, he received the All-Clean Mysteries, and then he yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord.

HERMITS PARTENIE AND GHERASIM
Sihăstria Monastery
(† 1940)

These hermits became monks at Neamţ Monastery. Hieromonk Partenie originated form Iaşi County, and Monk Gherasim originated from Botoşani County.

At the beginning of the century XX, Hieromonk Partenie, together with his disciples, they withdrew to quietude in the forests from around Sihăstria Monastery. There they built two monastic cells and s small chapel in a glade that has been called, until today, as "Partenie's Glade". This is because the forests and the peaks from around Agapia, Secu, Sihăstria, and Sihla Monasteries have been renowned during the last four centuries of hermit-like life. Hundreds of famous hermits lived in ascesis in that hermit-like hearth. The bones of many of them and the traces of their monastic cells can be found, even today, in that area. And their names have remained in the memory of their descendants, as toponyms of the glades, of the peaks, and of the creeks.

In that small glade that bears their name even today, Fathers Partenie and Gherasim lived in ascesis there, praying to God, day and night, for themselves and for the world. They especially loved fasting, and doing prostrations, and taking vigil at night, and reading the *Book of Psalms*, and they were imparted with the Body and with the Blood of our Lord, together with other hermits from around that area. They obtained their food by cultivating that glade with potatoes and other vegetables, and by gathering mushrooms from the forest. And they received their bread from Sihăstria Monastery.

One day a brother came from Sihăstria Monastery to the monastic cell of Father Partenie to ask him for useful word. And the old man asked him:

- Brother, do you know the *Book of Psalms* by heart?

- I don't, the brother answered him.

- Then, why do you stay in the monastery if you don't always read the *Psalms of David*?

Since that day, the brother stared learning the whole *Book of Psalms* by heart, and he never ate before finishing to utter it each day.

In the year 1932, Pious Fathers Partenie and Gherasim went to bow down before Lord's Tomb and they remained at one of the monasteries from there. So, being well-pleasant to God, after a few years, they passed away at Saint Sava Monastery, moving to the heavenly dwelling places.

ARCHIMANDRITE GREGORY GEORGESCU
Cheia Monastery – Prahova County
(1861-1940)

Worthy of being remembered Archimandrite Gregory Georgescu was the most chosen abbot of Cheia Monastery, after the year 1900. Son of believer parents, he originated from Săcele Commune – Braşov County, and at the age of 18 the crossed the Carpathian Mountains and he settled himself down at Ciolacu Monastery – Buzău County. In the year 1882 he left for the Holy Mountain, in order to consummate himself in the spiritual ascesis. In the year 1886 he was tonsured in monasticism at the Prodromul Romanian Hermitage, where he remained, in obedience, for eight years.

Adorned with many good deeds, in the year 1890, Monk Gregory turned back from Athos and definitively settled himself down at Cheia Monastery. Here he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, reaching to be a good confessor and a good servant of the Holy Altar. Between the years 1894-1909, Hieromonk Gregory served as priest and as confessor, both at Cheia Monastery and at the nuns Suzanna Monastery, officiating the holy religious services and raising many spiritual sons.

In the year 1909, Father Gregory was elected abbot of Cheia Monastery, which he led with much dignity and wisdom for 25 years. He was serving with awe the religious services, he was preaching inspiringly, he was comforting the people, he was encouraging the monks, he was helping poor children to attend the school, he was maintaining a full order and discipline in the monastery. He also helped to be built some new churches in villages, as also to be built a primary school in Izvoarele Commune – Prahova County.

The name of Father Gregory was renowned on Teleajenului Valley. He was a role-model of a confessor to laypeople and to monks. At him were coming believers from Bîrsa Country, from Braşov area, from Prahova County, and from Buzău Valley, and they were finding Father Gregory full of love and burning like a candle.

So was the old man lightening, as a torch among people, for a half of a century. In the year 1934 he withdrew himself from abbotship, and in the year 1940 he moved to the eternal resting, into the light of Christ.

PIOUS JOEL THE MONK
Peştera Ialomicioarei Hermitage
(† 1940)

Father Joel was a monk of the prayer and of the obedience. He originated form Avrig Commune – Sibiu County. Towared the end of the century XIX he came to serve to Christ, at Peştera Ialomicioarei Hermitage.

The most chosen ascesis of Father Joel was the prayer strengthened by fasting. He ate once a day during his entire life, boiled vegetables and greeneries. And when the enemy tempted him to eat too early, he rebuked himself saying:

- Keep enduring, you wicked, if you want to become a monk, for now isn't the time for eating, but it is the time for praying!

During the day he was fulfilling his tasks at the hermitage, while secretly uttering the *Prayer to Jesus*, and at night he was taking vigil, reading the *Book of Psalms* and doing prostrations. Then, immediately as he went to sleep, the enemy was upsetting him with all sorts of hallucinations. Sometimes, the enemy knocked on his door, telling him:

- Father Joel, come out for the abbot is calling for you!

On some other times the enemy entered his monastic cell under the countenance of a woman and told him:

- Father Joel, I've come to see you. Do you know who I am?

And the good ascetic, understanding the traps of the cunning devil, he banished the devil with this prayer:

- May God resurrect and all his enemies to be scattered…

The old man was steward, for a while, at Peştera Hermitage, and he was there, to everybody, a role-model of kindness, of humbleness, and of obedience. For his superior life he received from God the gift of fore-seeing. He was able to see what passions was dominating anybody. When somebody was coming close to him, he was advising that person by telling him:

- Brother, stop committing that sin, for I've seen the devil mastering you!

So, many were listening to old man's advice and they repented.

So lived Father Joel in ascesis, at Peştera Hermitage, for more than 40 years. Then he moved to the Lord, being found in his monastic cell having the *Book of Psalms* next to him.

HIEROMONK IGNATIUS RĂDULESCU
Saint Sava Monastery – Bethlehem
(† 1940)

This loving-of Christ father originated from Prahova County, and he became a monk at Sinaia Monastery. There he stayed for 20 years in obedience, living in pleasure for God and being found worthy of the gift of the

priesthood. Then, wanting to bow down before Lord's Tomb, in the year 1925 he left for the Holy Places and he remained at Saint Sava Monastery from Judea's Desert. There were living in ascesis two more Romanian monks, together enduring the needs, the heat, and the living abroad.

Later on, Father Ignatius found a cave nearby, so that he withdrew himself into wilderness, fulfilling seven years of harsh hermit-like ascesis there. And his ascesis, and his tears, and the temptations coming upon him from the devils, which he endured there, only God knows those. So, he turned back to the monastery, where he got sick and he was bedridden for five years in his monastic cell, being cared by Hierodeacon Beniamin Trifan, a former inhabitant of the Buluc Hermitage from Vrancea County.

The fathers said that, sometimes, the old man stayed at the door of his monastic cell and he was looking towards the external tower, where the pilgrims were arriving, because he wanted to see some Romanian coming from the country. But for his love for Christ, he manly endured both his illness and the living abroad.

One day he summoned his disciple and told him:

- Vanish, satan, from my monastic cell, may the Holy Cross hit you! and so he was being delivered.

Then he added:

- Father Beniamin, be you blessed by God and by me! May the Lord reward you for the love with which you have been taking care of me!

Then he got enlightened and gladdened at his face and he immediately yielded his ghost.

MONK JOB BURLACU
Neamţ Monastery
(1874-1941)

a. His Life

Pious Job the Monk was one of the most spiritual monks from the community of Neamţ Monastery. He was a great ascetic, a famous pharmacist, and a knower of medicinal plants, and he greatly loved the poor.

He was born in Boroaia Commune – Suceava County. In the year 1906, taking his cross upon himself, he followed to Christ, and he became a monk at Neamţ Monastery. There he lived in ascesis for 35 years, being appointed pharmacist of the monastery and caretaker for the old father and for the sick ones form the infirmary.

In the autumn of the year 1941, Pious Job the monk passed away, peacefully, and he was buried in the monastery's cemetery.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Father Job surpassed all the other monks living in the monastery, by these three good deeds: with his fasting, with his ceaseless prayer, and with the wakefulness of his mind. He was permanently keeping his eyes downwards, and he was cogitating at death. His mind was full of the whole wisdom, his face was serene, and his heart was always open to everybody.

2. His disciple said that he never saw Father Job laughing, or uttering useless words. His speech was very short and his words pierced everybody's heart like some arrows. He ate once a day, in the evening, and he slept a few hours at night, on a bench, having as pillow a boulder wrapped in paper.

3. On occasions, the old man said:

- Brothers, let all of us be ready for travelling, because no one is eternal on earth. And if we don't have what to show to Christ, how will we stay in front of Him?

4. Some other times, Father Job said:

- The man is so deceived by the sweetness of this life! He even reaches to be so attached to the matter that he refuses the joys of the eternal life. That's why, such a man does everything to avoid dying. And when his death comes, it will find him unprepared and despaired. He who is unprepared he will die a difficult death. And he who is prepared he waits, joyfully, the time of his death which he has been cogitating at for his entire life. His end will be full of peace and hope, for he goes to Christ.

5. Father Job was a great knower of the medicinal plants and a renowned pharmacist. He himself was gathering the plants, during summer, from glades and from forests, he was preserving them, and he was making of them sirups and unguents, which he was distributing, for free, to the sick monks and laypeople. For 30 years he was pharmacist and nurse at the infirmary of Neamț Monastery. His name was known everywhere. That was because there were coming to see him ill monks and laypeople from all surrounding monasteries and villages, and Father Job was welcoming all of them with love, he was providing them medical consultation, and he was giving them medicines prepared by himself, and many of them got healed.

6. This father loving-of God, he took care, with a great love, for the suffering monks from the infirmary. There he had his monastic cell and his pharmacy. There he was tarrying, day and night, next to the beds of the ill ones, comforting them, bandaging their wounds, changing the linens, or sharing them the food he brought from refectory. For that, everybody loved Father Job, and they called him "our parent". He fulfilled this task, joyfully, until the end of his life.

7. His disciple said that Father Job never missed from the church, especially at night. He always stood, behind everyone, with his sight downwards, and having the prayer on his lips. Then he turned back to his monastic cell and he was reading the Chape of the Mother of the Lord, Whom he had a great awe for.

8. The great ascetic was, also, very merciful on the poor people. There were coming daily to see him orphan children, ill people, end very poor people

form Pipirig Village, and they were asking him for alms. And Father Job was nourishing them with the food he had at the infirmary. Then he gave them a little sum of money, and to the ill ones he shared medicines, and after that he was sending everyone, in peace, to their homes.

9. His disciple said that Father Job sat everyone to the table, with love, and asked them:

- How do you prefer your soup, warmer of colder?

He asked other people:

- Do you want bitter tea for your stomach, or a warm bath for your feet?

As each one wanted, he served them, with rarely encountered love, for Father Job was strengthened and overshadowed by the Holy Ghost.

10. Once, a father asked him whether the monks owed to give alms to the poor. And the old mand answered him:

- If you have what to give, you will ought to give! Only if you have nothing to give you will be spared of giving alms.

- But aren't the monks exonerated of giving alms? I think that only the laypeople owe to give alms.

- Yest, the old man answered him, the true monks are exonerated of giving alms. But are you a monk? The monks must have nothing, they ought to be deprived of any matter, they must wear only one coat, and that one must be worn out too. If you have what to give as alms but you do not give, you could escape people's rebuke, but you won't escape God's rebuke.

11. One day Father Job bought a beautiful icon paying 700 units of currency for that icon. Later on, a believer asked him:

- Will you sell this icon to me? For it is very beautiful!

- I will sell it to you.

- How much do you want me to pay you for it, father?

- Three hundred units of currency.

Hearing that, his disciple asked him:

- Why have you sold that icon for less than a half of the price you paid for it?

- If I sold it for the same amount of money as I bought it, I wouldn't have given alms. And if I gave it for free, I would be tormented by the thought of the pride. So, thus, I have both given alms and got rid of the devil of the pride.

12. A father gave to Father Job a thick coat for the winter, for Father Job was poor. But Father Job saw a destitute man father of seven children, and he gave that coat to that man. One day, the father who initially gave him that coat, asked Father Job:

- Where is the coat I have given to you, Father Job? Has somebody stollen it from you?

- Forgive me, father, the old man answered him, for a man having many children came to see me and I have given it to him, for I have everything I need, glory to the Lord!

ARCHIMANDRITE ANTIPA DINESCU
Prodromul Hermitage – Mount Athos
(1852-1942)[323]

This venerable confessor and archimandrite, he was the worthiest abbot of Prodromul Hermitage after the year 1900. He was born in Prahova County, to loving-of God parents. Beign called by the Holy Ghost to the monastic life, in the year 1880 he went to the Romanian Prodromul Hermitage from Mount Athos. There he became a monk and he learnt the obedience, the humbleness, and the churchly singing, form the best Romanian monks, among whom was distinguishing Nectareous the Chief-Singer.

In the year 1890 he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, officiating the holy religious services with a special piousness. Then he was appointed superior to the Romanian Darvari Hermitage from Bucharest, the subordinated unit of Prodromul Hermitage, proving himself a skilled confessor. In the year 1900 he was unanimously elected Abbot of Prodromul Hermitage, which he led with a rare gentleness and wisdom for 14 years. He was a chosen confessor, a priest loving the holy things, a monk with a good countenance, an abbot and a father having numerous spiritual sons. Lo the gifts of Abbot Antipa Dinescu. Under his leadership, Prodromul Hermitage recorded a flourishing epoque, having a community counting over 100 monks.

In the year 1814, Pious Archimandrite Antipa Dinescu came into the country with a few disciples and he reached to be Abbot of Căldăruşani Monastery, which he led with a rare skillfulness for 20 years. In addition to the good management of the monastery, Father Antipa became a great confessor to the monks and to the laypeople, being him searched for and cherished by everybody.

He withdrew himself, again, to Moutn Athos, wrere he lived in ascesis, for 8 years, together with his disciple, in a monastic cell by the sea shore. Ending his journey, in the year 1942, he yielded his soul in the hand of the lord and he was buried there, by the sea shore.

ARCHIMANDRITE BARLAAM ARGHIRESCU
Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava
(1863-1942)

a. His Life

Father Barlaam Arghirescu was a famous monk in the monasteries of Moldavia and a devoted servant of the Church of Christ.

[323] According to the testimonies of Archimandrite Hrisostom Postolache, the abbot of Bucium Hermitage – Iași County, who was the disciple of Archimandrite Antipa Dinescu; V. Romanescu, *Metropolitan Athanasius Mironescu*, Buchares, 1942, p. 199.

He originated form Hangu Commune, Neamţ County. At the age of 18 he entered Neamţ Monastery. After a few years of discipleship, he became a monk and then he was ordained as deacon by Abbot Timothy. In the year 1892 he was sent as servant to the Cathedral of the Metropolitanate from Iaşi. There he lived in consummate obedience for 50 years. In the summer of the year 1942 he passed away, peacefully, and he was buried at Cetăţuia Monastery.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Archdeacon Barlaam served in the church of Neamţ Monastery with a great awe and he was singing angelically beautifully. After hearing him singing one, and knowing his way of living, Metropolitan Iosif Nanescu took him at the Metropolitan Cathedral from Iaşi, nd there he remained until the end of his life.

2. The old fathers said that Father Barlaam loved the church so much, as he loved Christ too. He tarried for the whole day in the cathedral, setting the vestments, fitting the candles, sweeping the floor, or taking vigil next to the holy relics of Saint Parascheva. That's why the whole city knew him and benefited of his ascesis.

3. This worthy servant of the Church of Christ was, for fifty years, church steward and vestments clerk, at the Cathedral. The fathers said about him that he used to lock himself alone in the church and he never left before finishing his tasks. Then he made three prostrations at the holy relics of Saint Paracheva and only after that he left for his monastic cell.

4. His disciples said that Father Barlaam didn't allow anybody to speak within church. If he heard somebody talking, he stopped himself from reading and from singing in the pew. Then he continued again. When he entered the church, the others said to one another:

- Be quiet, for Father Barlaam is coming!

5. They also said about him that he didn't allow the speedy reading in the pew. If some singer was reading unclearly and speedily, the old man stopped him and started himself to read again and to sing, saying:

- "Listen to words of my mouth, Lord, understand my shouting out" (Ps. 5: 1)[324].

6. Another good deed of Father Barlaam was the giving of alms. Following the example of the Great Metropolitan Iosif, he shared everything he had to the poor people, to widows, and to students. His salary was never enough because of that. He was constantly borrowing money. He gave the most alms to the poor students from Iaşi. On a daily basis were coming to the old man, as to a true spiritual father, and asked him for money for paying their school fees, for books, and for rent. And the father comforted them by words and asked them:

- How much do you need?

- One hundred currency units.

[324] In KJB we have: Ps. 5: 1: "GIVE ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation." (E. l. t.'s n.)

- Here's the money. Bring me a receipt from the school.

- Father Barlaam, when do you want me give your money back?

- Don't mind about that, when I will need it, I will ask you for it. The receipt is what I need for now.

Bu the old man never asked for his money back.

7. His disciples said that on the day he received his salary, numerous poor students were gathering at his monastic cell. Because they announced on one another, saying:

- Let's go to the Metropolitanate, for today Father Barlaam is receiving his salary!

Many of them reached to be literate people, due to the money given by Father Barlaam.

8. One day, a widow living in the countryside came to him and told him, crying:

- Father, I am widow and I have seven children. My milk-cow has died recently, and I have no money for buying another.

- Don't mind, mother, don't cry. How much is it worth a milk-cow?

- It is a thousand currency units.

- Lo, take these two thousand currency units, and buy two milk-cows. Thank Pious Parascheva for that, and don't tell to anybody.

So understood Father Barlaam how to fulfill the Gospel of Christ.

9. One day, a man from Dorohoi told himŞ

- Father Barlaam, lend me a thousand monetary units for I need to buy something here in Iaşi, and as soon as I arrive home, I will send your money back to you.

- Here brother, take this one thousand of monetary currency.

After five years, his disciple went to Dorohoi and Father Barlaam told him, smiling:

- Brother, if you haphazardly encounter that man, ask him whether he has reached home yet, after five years…

10. His disciples said about Archdeacon Barlaam that for fifty years as he served at the Metropolitanate he never missed from the church, and despite he never lit the fire in his monastic cell during winter, he was never sick. This was because the gift of God was with him.

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This was the greatest wealth of Father Barlaam!

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will find mercy" (Mt. 5: 7).

MONK IOANICHIE STURZU
Secu Monastery
(1880-1943)

Father Ioanichie Sturzu was a famous alleviator of the human sufferings, by the help of the medicinal plants. He was born in Pipirig Commune, and in his youth, he was shepherd of sheep. Then, for he loved the monastic life, and he took upon himself the monastic yoke, and he was very obedient in everything, gentle at word, and merciful.

Father Ioanichie was fulfilling the mercy on his neighbor both as steward of the guest house, by welcoming and accommodating the guests in the guest house, and also especially by taking care, with his own hands, of the ill people who suffered of rheumatism. Being a good knower of the medicinal plants, Father Ioanichie gathered them at the due time and he prepared them and he waited for using them. Not far from his monastic cell he had a house with four chambers, some sort of infirmary having four beds and with bath tubs. There he was receiving, for free, people from villages who suffered of rheumatism, and he kept them there until they felt better.

And the treatment provide by him was this: firstly, he asked the sick people to confess their sins; then he remembered them in the church and at the Holy Unction; then he prepared for them warm baths, with plants prepared by himself. At noon he brought food to the patients, from the refectory. And the good ascetic continued so for 15-20 days. The old men who knew Father Ioanichie, testified that the patients treated by him turned back to their homes healthier, and some of them were definitively cured by his prayer and treatment. For an ascesis like this, the name and the mercy of Father Ioanichie were known everywhere.

This was his toil for 25 years. Then, getting sick himself, like any other mortal, in the year 1943 he moved to the eternal life, where there is no pain, neither sadness, no sigh.

NUN EPIHARIA MOISESCU
Bistriţa Monastery – Vîlcea County
(1870-1943)

This loving-of Christ nun is renowned in our monasticism especially for his benefaction deeds. She originated from Săcele locality – Braşov County. She entered Suzanna Monastery in her youth, and there she became a nun. In the year 1900 she was appointed educator to “Saint Catherine” orphanage from Bucharest. There he worked for ten years, raising thousands of orphans into the fear of God. Between the years 1910-1916 she was the principal of a girls-orphanage from Bucharest, being helped by other two nuns.

Later on, the orphanage was definitively moved to Bistriţa Monastery – Vîlcea County, where it functioned, uninterruptedly, for 40 years. In addition to that orphanage, there was founded also a kindergarten, an elementary school for four grades, a monastic seminary for nuns, and, later on, a high school for girls having all kinds of workshops. All these schools from Bistriţa Monastery formed the so-called "The Cover of the Mother of the Lord Association", a monastic philanthropical organization unique in the Romanian monasticism.

The soul of that settlement was the venerable Nun Epiharia, the principal of the association, helped by nuns Olga and Theodosia Gologanu. For nine years, Mother Epiharia together with her two disciples, they raised and educated countless orphan children, helping them to become literates, helping them to learn a trade, and pouring into their soul the faith in God and the love for people, as some true spiritual mothers. Thus, our monasticism regained its spiritual role from the past.

In the year 1925 Mother Epiharia was appointed Abbot to Horezu Monastery, leaving in her place he closes disciple: Nun Olga Gologanu. After eight years of good management of Horezu Monastery, Mother Epiharia Moisescu turned back to Bistriţa Monastery, in the middle of te hundreds of orphans. The, after asking everybody for forgiveness, she yielded her soul in the hand of the Lord and she was buried at Păpuşa Hermitage from nearby.

PROTOSYNCELLUS IOSIF CRĂCIUN
Neamţ Monastery
(1864-1944)

This Pious Father was a great hermit, a confessor, and an exorcist from the community of Neamţ Monastery.

He was born in Gîrcina Commune – Neamţ County. In his youth he was married. After his wife died, in the year 1911, at the advice of the famous pilgrim Gheorghe Lazăr, whose disciple he was, he took upon himself the yoke of the monastic life in the community of Neamţ Monastery. After five years of prayer and obedience, he received the monastic countenance and he lived in ascesis, for a few years, at the nearby Vovidenia Hermitage. Then, with the blessing of the abbot, Schemamonk Iosif Crăciun withdrew himself to quietude in the ancestral forests from around Icoana Veche hermitage, where he lived in ascesis, in the wilderness, for ten years, alone with God, enduring all sorts of temptations from the devils, from his body, and from people.

His biggest toil was the long fasting, united with the taking vigil at nigh and with the reading of the *Book of Psalms*. With these three weapons he was banishing away from himself all the bodily and devilish temptations, reaching to be known all over Neamţ County.

For his patience and humbleness, Father Iosif was found by God worthy of the gift of banishing away the evil ghosts from within people. That's why all

sorts of epileptics and of ill people who lacked any comforting, they were running to his monastic cell. And the old mand welcomes anyone with love, and he prayer for their health until they were healed.

Lo how Father Iosif was praying for the ill people:

Firstly, he sent the ill man to the monastery to confess his sins and for the priests to administrate to that man the Holy Unction. Then the ill man turned back to Father Iosif's monastic cell in the forest, where the ill man followed to be submitted to fasting and to prayer for three days and three nights, and together with him all the ill man's relatives and Hermit Iosif himself, and they were reading the *Book of Psalms* for the whole day and night. On the third day, most of the ill people were healed. They who didn't get healed, they were repeating the same ascesis until they were delivered from the devil, because the enemy cannot endure the prayer and the fasting.

For such healings, and for his full of wisdom advice, Father Iosif reached to be famous all over Moldavia's center, under the name of "The Hermit with the icon".

In the year 1926 Schemamonk Iosif was called to the community and after two years he was ordained deacon and then priest. Thus, Hermit Iosif became the most searched for confessor and exorcist of Neamţ Monastery, between the years 1928-1944. On a daily basis, the believes were coming to his monastic cell: peasants and townsmen, healthy and ill, young and old, monks and laypeople, beggars and wealthy people. All of them were searching for Father Iosif. Although he was harsh in giving penances, they wanted to confess their sins to him, to become healthy, and to ask him for advice.

For accommodating and taking care of the ill people, Father Iosif had a house given by the monastery, outside the enclosure. That was a true infirmary. There the old man was welcoming everyone, and he stood in their middle day and night, with his cross in his hand and with his epitrachelion on his chest. Thus, many of the ill people got healed, and others turned back top their homes unburdened of sins and comforted. The means for healing were the same for everyone: as much prayer as possible, confession of sins, Holy Unction, the Exorcisms of Saint Basil, the Holy Impartation, and, necessarily, three days of fasting.

Other asceses of the great Confessor Iosif was that of secretly working the *Prayer to Jesus*, and also giving alms to the needy.

This was the way of living of Pious Iosif Crăciun, the Confessor of Neamţ Monastery. Then, being him called God, in the spring of the year 1944 he moved to the heavenly dwelling places, being remembered until these days by his numerous spiritual sons.

PROTOSYNCELLUS IOANICHIE MOROI
Sihăstria Monastery
(1859-1944)

a. His Life

This Pious Father was the most famous abbot of Sihăstria Monastery from Century XX. He was born in Zărneşti City – Braşov County, and he was married and he had two children. Then, for he wanted to follow to Christ, he entered the monastic ascesis, as his wife and as his children did too. Between the years 1890-1900 he lived in ascesis at a Romanian hermitage from Mount Athos. Then he turned back into the country and lived, for nine years, at Neamţ Monastery.

In the year 1909 he was appointed abbot of Sihăstria Monastery, which he led, with dignity, for 35 years. After entirely reorganizing the monastic life in that monastery, he gathered around himself more than 40 disciples, Protosyncellus Ioanichie Moroi moved to the eternal life, in the autumn of the year 1944.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. wanting to take upon himself the yoke of the monastic ascesis, the young John Moroi asked for the advice of the great pilgrim Gheorghe Lazăr, whose disciple he was.

That one told him:

- Stay, for a year, under obedience, at Peştera Ialomicioarei Hermitage and read the entire *Book of Psalms* daily. If you can endure the temptations from the enemy and the enemy is unable to deceive you, then you will be able to become a monk.

So, after living in that hermitage for a year, during the day fulfilling his tasks and at night talking vigil and reading the *Book od Psalms*, one night, while he was praying in his shack from the edge of the forest, a foreign monk came to visit him and told him:

- What are you doing, brother John, and why do you torment yourself so harshly?

- Father, I want to become a monk.

- You are deeply wrong. You cannot remain into monastery. Lo, your wife at home lived with other men and she scatters all your wealth.

- Where do you know all these things from? the young man asked him, troubled.

- I lived for 40 years in the Jordan Desert and I've received from God the gift of fore-seeing, so that I know the thoughts of the man.

- So, what should I do?

- Go home and be master upon your wife and upon your wealth.

Then, that monks went closer to the fire and jumped into it and disappeared. It was the devil.

Engulfed with thoughts, the young John Moroi left for home on that very hour, enduring many temptations on his way. Later on, the old man Gheorghe Lazăr saw him and told him:

- You cannot bear yet the yoke of the monasticism. Remain, for a little longer, in your family.

2. In the year 1890 young John Moroi went to bow down in front of the Lord's Tomb, together with other pilgrims. Then, when he reached at the cave of Pious Xenophon, he met there a holy hermit who told him:

- Brother John, have you come here to look for holy men? Never in your life follow to any man, regardless how holy that man would seem to you. This is for today you benefit of him, but tomorrow he could offend you. Do you want to have a guide in your life? Read the Holy Scripture, and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and follow their words as much as you can, for they won't ever lie to you.

You mut know that you will become a monk at the Holy Mountain, but, after a few years, you will turn back into your country and you will reach to be priest and leader to brothers, and at the end of your life you will endure a big temptation. But, if you are patient, by the help of Christ, you will overcome everything and you will be crowned.

This prophecy was fulfilled exactly, in the life of Protosyncellus Ioanichie Moroi.

3. In the year 1909, being him found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, Father Ioanichie was appointed abbot to Sihăstria Hermitage, which was in a state of dereliction. His disciple said that for 35 years he suffered in that hermitage all sorts of temptations, shortages, persecutions from the devil, menaces from the people, illnesses, and other needs. But for his faith and patience, by the help of the Mother of the Lord, he made of a deserted hermitage the most chosen hermitage from Romania.

4. The fathers said that he introduced, since the first day, in the church the daily Liturgy and the seven praises, according to the rules from Neamț Monastery, and he never gave the blessing for starting the religious service until all the brothers were gathered.

5. They also said about him that he always officiated the holy religious services with much fasting, with faith, and with tears. Especially during Lent, he didn't eat except on Saturdays and on Sundays. During the other days he strengthened himself only with the Holy Mysteries.

6. They also said about this abbot that for 20 years he officiated the Holy Liturgy daily, with the same love for Christ, for he was the only priest and confessor to the hermitage.

7. The rules of the Sihăstria Monastery under the Abbot Ioanichie Moroi were the following:

- participating of the entire community to Matins and to the Holy Liturgy. He who didn't come to church because of being lazy, he was given as penance to fast on the next day until evening;

- the general confession of sins of the monks on each Friday;

- Holy Impartation for schemamonks and for the ill ones once a week, on Saturday, and for all the others once every three weeks;

- the life for totally communal; no one was allowed to have anything personal; the clothing, the monastic cell, and the other things one needed, were provided by monastery;

- they served the meals once a day on Monday, on Wednesday, and on Friday, at 3 pm, and on the other days twice a day, according to the typicon of Saint Sava; nobody was allowed to eat in his monastic cell, except the ill ones;

- everybody attended the diverse activities, together with the monastery's abbot, and each one owed to work in silence in order to be able to utter the *Prayer to Jesus*;

- in their monastic cells, the monks were reading especially the *Book of Psalms*, the *Paterikon*, and the *Lives of the Saints*, and the seven praises and the canon never remained unfulfilled.

8. In the year 1925, after the correction of the calendar, Protosyncellus Ioanichie was in a big doubt. He didn't know whether the new style was good or not. So, he locked himself in his monastic cell and started fasting and praying until God will give him a sign what calendar he should keep.

After almost 20 days of fasting, the old man was found in his monastic cell very weakened. Then, after strengthening himself with the Holy Mysteries and with a little food, on the second day he told to his spiritual sons:

- Many temptations I've been suffering these days from the devils. Because sometimes they menaced me to kill me. Some other times they have been beating me with fire-staffs. Once I've seen a devi9ls group saying:

- Let's cut this old man because he wants to become a saint! Then they have shouted out, angrily, upon me:

- Who has told you that these days people still are becoming saints?

- But had told you that people do not become saints? I answered them.

On some other day they told me, angrily:

- You are fasting vainly, for you are going to come to our hands anyway!

And I have told them:

- I hope in the mercy of God, that I will be delivered from your hands!

After several days of fasting, I have seen above me, in the sky, three saints dressed up like hierarchs, resembling to the Holy Three Hierarchs. The one from the middle told me with a trumpet-like voice:

- Ioanichie, why do you doubt and disobey? Don't you know that obedience is greater than sacrifice? So, listen to the great ones, for won't be you taken accountable for correcting the calendar. The, all three blessed me in the same time, and they went up and I've stopped seeing them.

Since that day, the old man hasn't doubted the correction of the calendar.

9. One day the water-well went dry because of the drought. Then the abbot said into the church:

- Fathers, because of our sins God has taken the water from the well. So, let's fast and pray for three days and nights, until God will give us again water into the well. All the other tasks from the monastery are stopping now.

Rightly so, for the prayers of the fathers, on the third day the water-well was half full with water. Since that day, with the blessing of the abbot, that water-well has never gone dry.

10. The disciples said that on those who came to the monastic life, the abbot submitted them in the first place, to a harsh spiritual temptation, in order to make of them good monks and devoted to Christ. He kept some of them at the gate for three days, for three days and for three nights, in fasting and in prayer. To others he often gave them penances and prostrations in order to teach them the humbleness. He was advising all of them not to gather money, neither to leave the monastery, and he was urging them to pray ceaselessly uttering the *Prayer to Jesus*.

11. He sometimes told to his disciples:

- Brothers, bear in your mind these two things, for the whole your life: cutting off your own will and guarding the blessing. This is because he who transgresses these commandments cannot be monk and the things never go well for him. This is for we are sons of the blessing, and not of the curse.

12. The fathers said that each time one had transgressed the word of the abbot, that one suffered many temptations. This was because the abbot asked for everything to be done with blessing.

Once, two brothers had held a counsel and they had decided, on their own, to be fasting and praying in a dungeon, unknown to anybody. After a week they came to the abbot and told him:

- Father Abbot, we pray you to take our confession, for we want to receive the Holy Impartation tomorrow.

- But where have you been until now?

- We have been fasting and praying into the dungeon.

- Who have given you the blessing for that?

- But should we ask for blessing even for fasting and for prayer?

- I won't take your confessions until you repent for your disobedience, the old man told them.

On the nest day those brothers became ill. Then the abbot ordered the community to fast and to pray for them. They had been administrated the Holy Unction and so they got healed, and so those brothers got delivered from disobedience.

13. Some other time, a brother from the monastery asked for be made monk. But Abbot Ioanichie, because he knew that brother's heart, he constantly postponed him. One day the brother told to the Abbot:

- I am going to go to Tg. Neamț in order to buy post stamps and paper for my application for being made monk.

- Don't go because now is the Lent and we are not supposed to walk through the world.

But the brother still left. And he didn't walk but for a kilometer and seven evil ghosts held his way, as fearsome men, and they started beating him with staffs, telling him:

- Let's catch this one because he has left the monastery without the blessing of the abbot! Afraid, the brother run for the forest. Then he turned back to the monastery, shouting out:

- Help me, seven are running after me!

The fathers, seeing him possessed by an unclean ghost, they took him to his monastic cell and they told to the abbot. And the old man read him the exorcisms of Saint Basil and told them:

- Untie him and let him go.

- What should we do if he ran away again?

- Do not fear. If God has untied him, the enemy won't possess him anymore. And the brother got healed so.

From that moment onwards, nobody dared to transgress abbot's commandment.

14. During a winter, a brother forgot the dungeon open, and the potatoes froze. The next day, the abbot askes the brothers when in refectory:

- Who has left the dungeon open? I pray them to confess their mistake here, publicly. But nobody was admitting it. Then the old man said:

- If the guilty doesn't admit his guilt, God will rebuke him.

On that very moment a brother fell to the ground as possessed by an unclean ghost. He was the guilty one. So, he was immediately taken to the church, they administrated him the Holy Unction, and he got healed, for protosyncellus Ioanichie received from God the gift of banishing the unclean ghosts away from within people.

15. On one occasion, the old man suffered some temptation from the enemy. So, by rebuking on himself, on the next day he told to the fathers and to the brothers, in the church:

- Fathers and brothers, I no longer can be your abbot and spiritual father, because I have mistaken in front of the Lord. Search for another adviser in my place. And the fathers told him, with tears:

- Father abbot, do not leave us orphans, because there is nobody who can advise us on the path to salvation. Let that sin remain upon us, only that you not leave us alone.

- I will remain abbot, the old man said, only if you promise me that you fulfill my word.

- We are going to fulfill everything you tell us to do, father.

Then the abbot lied down on his face on the church's threshold and told them:

- He won't be partaker to Christ who doesn't step over me! So, all of them went out stepping over his body. So, he remained, further on, at the helm of the monastery, and the fathers and the brothers benefited of the humbleness of the old man.

16. For his humbleness ands for his ascesis, protosyncellus Ioanichie reached to be a hermit and a confessor renowned on that area. To him were coming for advice and for confessing their sins numerous hermits from that area, monks, abbots, bishops, and laypeople. Though he was very canonical and authoritarian, he still found comforting and encouraging words for each one. The most usual penance was the long fasting, the prayer, especially the reading of the *Book of Psalms*, and the consummate obedience.

The old man was searched for also by ill people coming for being administrated the Holy Unction, and some of them turned back healthy.

17. On occasions some brothers, because of being troubled by temptations, they came to see the old man and he was teaching them, by telling them:

- You have not my blessing to leave the monastery for anywhere, as long as you are disturbed. This is because the troubled mind never can judge and make a decision according to the will of God.

18. And he was advising his spiritual sons often, by telling them:

- Fathers, do not ever forget these three things: you must have the fear of God, you must guard your mind clean, and you must not forget uttering "Lord Jesus!".

19. Starting with the year 1941, many temptations and troubles came upon Sihăstria Monastery. In the first place, the church and the entire enclosure got burnt down. Then the robbers plundered that holy place for several times, beating the abbot and leaving him blind. Because of those reasons, a part of the monks got scattered to other monasteries. Then Father Ioanichie remembered the words of the great old man Gheorghe Lazăr, told him 30 years earlier:

- I don't congratulate you for coming to this place, because at the end of your life you are going to suffer many temptations.

20. The old man told to his disciples that one night, while he was bedridden, a decently dressed up woman entered his monastic cell and, getting close to him, she told him:

- Do not be sad, Father Ioanichie. From now on, we are going to take care of this holy place! She was the All-Holy Birth Giver of God, the protector of that humble monastic settlement. Rightly so, starting with the year 1942, they permanently have been feeling the protection and the blessing of the Mother of the Lord upon Sihăstria Monastery.

21. On one occasion, the whole community gathered at the abbot's monastic cell, for taking blessing and for hearing useful word:

- Fathers, do not be discouraged because of the burning down of the monastery. This is because it got burnt down because of your sins, and in order the founders to be renewed. Your holiness must endure all the temptations and you must not leave this place that has been sanctified by prayer and by the tears of our forefathers. You must only keep, strongly, the rules of this monastery. This is because he who doesn't observe the rules of the place, this place will banish him away.

In the year 1909, when I was ordained priest, an old monk from Neamț Monastery approached me and he told me: "You have to know, Father Ioanichie, that only those ones will be able to stay at Sihăstria Hermitage who keep the hermit-like rules from there. Namely, nobody owning anything, but everything to belong to the community; nobody to commit bodily sins, and not being eaten meat in the monastery. If somebody doesn't keep those rules, he won't be able to live in that place. This is because that place has been tied, with unchangeable oath, by seven hermits from Neamț Monastery, who had founded Sihăstria in the year 1655.

22. At the end, the abbot added these words too:

- Keep, strongly, the monastic rules and do not let even one day to pass without officiating the godlike Liturgy and the seven praises. This is for, if you do so and if you leave a clean life and if you have love among yourselves, you will know that the Mother of the Lord will built this place out of its ashes, and you will have peace and salvation in this place. And if you don't observe, thoroughly, the praying program, the fasting, and your monastic duties, you must know that this place will be deserted again, because God likes more a deserted and clean place than a place with many divided monks.

23. After two years of suffering, on one evening, Abbot Ioanichie told to Hieromonk Joel, who was his disciple:

- On Tuesday I am going to go to the Father! On Tuesday I am going to go to the Father!

Rightly so, on a day of Tuesday, 5th of September, Protosyncellus Ioanichie Moroi yielded his soul in the hand of the lord, leaving behind a chosen community of 40 monks[325].

So lived in ascesis and passed away a great Abbot of the Romanian Monasticism.

SCHEMAMONK GREGORY BICA
Ciolacu Monastery – Buzău County
(† 1945)

Father Gregory Bica was a very ascetic monk from Ciolacu Monastery. He originated form Transylvania. So, following to Christ, he became schemamonk at Ciolacu Monastery, and for the whole his life he had two tasks: ecclesiarch and gardener. And he advanced so much at prayer, at fasting, and at humbleness, that everybody benefited of his ascesis. He had two disciples in the garden, whom he raised in the fear of God. On occasions he told them:

- Brothers, you have to work the garden with love and without speaking against, for out of your toil are fed so many people.

[325] The life and the deeds of Protosyncellus Ioanichie Moroi have been recorded according to the testimonies of his disciples: Archimandrite Cleophas Elijah and Protosyncellus Joel Gheorghiu, from Sihăstria Monastery.

In the summer, the old man was tarrying to water the watering of the garden until late, and when he came to the refectory, the cook was teloing him:

- There is no food left, Father Gregory. Why are you late and why don't you come when the bell rings for the table? But the old man never got upset, but he asked for forgiveness, and he peacefully turned back to the garden.

He never missed the church, on each night. He was the first to arrive, he sat in the pew, and he was uttering the *Prayer to Jesus*.

On one occasion, a monk asked him:

- How can you still come to attend the church, Father Gregory, aren't you tired after working for the whole day into the garden?

And the old man answered him:

- The church is a ship sailing at the sea. If I miss from the Church, the ship will sail forwards, and I will remain far from Christ! That's why I regularly attend the church.

On some other occasion, he told to one of his disciples:

- I've been fighting my body – this untamed horse - for my whole life – and I have been doing everything I can, by the help of God, not to let my body throwing me down.

A brother told him:

- Father Gregory, give be a useful word!

And the old man told him:

- Among all the passions, the monk is being fought by laziness and by self-appreciation, out of which all the other passions are born. This is for the enemy urges the monk to spare his body, to eat well, not to attend the church, not to do prostrations, and to sleep longer. And if the monk overcomes his self-appreciation, he will easily defeat all the other passions.

The end of Father Gregory was equally wonderful as his life was too. One night, as he was praying, a beautiful young man, mounted on a horse, appeared to him and told him:

- Prepare yourself, for in three days I am going to come to take you with me. I am going to come when the semantron is going to be played.

- Who are you? the old man asked that young man.

- I am Martyr George, the patron of this church, and I've come to let you know!

Then Father Gregory asked everybody for forgiveness, he confessed his sins, and he was Imparted with the All-Clean Mysteries, and on the third morning, when the semantron had been played for calling the monks to the church, he yielded his ghost in the hands of the Lord.

His bones, yellow and blessed, are preserved in the cemetery of the monastery.

PROTOSYNCELLUS GIDEON VERENCIUC
Vorona Hermitage – Botoşani County
(1891-1945)[326]

Father Gideon Verenciuc was born in Oneaga Commune, Botoşani County. In the year 1914 he received the monastic countenance at Vorona Hermitage.

That hermitage was, between XVIII-XIX Centuries, a renowned hermitage in the north-west part of Moldavia. There lived hesychastic monks, having a holy life, who were practicing the *Prayer to Jesus*. Some of them were living in ascesis at "the hermitage from Vorona Glade" – the present monastery bearing the same name today. Others were living in ascesis at Vorona Hermitage, among whom the most renowned was Pious Onuphrius (Century XVIII). The most pious of them were living in ascesis in the ancestral forests from around the hermitage. Many of those hermits remained unknown. Towards the end of the Century XIX, the number of the monks from Vorona Hermitage decreased. They barely managed to keep the religious services uninterrupted. The hesychastic tradition from that famous monastic hearth was almost completely interrupted. The church itself and the monastic cells reached a state of dereliction.

That was the spiritual state of the Vorona Hermitage in the year 1914, where Monk Gideon Verenciuc arrived there. The fathers from there, seeing his zeal and skillfulness, they made him priest after a few years. Then, after the abbot moved away from this life, in the year 1925, Protosyncellus Gideon was appointed Abbot of Vorona Hermitage. He led the hermitage for more than 20 years, elevating it to a new state of flourishment. He renewed the church, the monastic cells, and the spiritual life, and he educated over twenty disciples, raising them in the fear of God and in zeal for the church. Hearing about his name and his ascesis, many believers from that area were running to the Vorona Hermitage. Some of them were coming to listen to the religious service, for Father Gideon was serving and singing very beautifully. And others were coming to confess their sins and to ask for advice, for he was a famous confessor and a great ascetic.

This worthy of being remembered abbot was also a skilled teacher of churchly music. He was gathering around him up to 20 disciples, your men from villages, whom he was teaching religion and churchly singing. Some of those reached to be good parish singers, and other remained into monastery reaching skilled monks. All of them remember their teacher and spiritual father, with love and gratitude.

So lived in ascesis Protosyncellus Gideon Verencius until the beginning of the year 1945, extolling Christ, serving the Church, comforting the people, teaching disciples, and persevering, day and night, in prayer and in fasting.

[326] According to the testimonies of the confessors from Vorona Monastery.

Then, he got sick, and he yielded his soul in the hands of the lord and he was buried by his spiritual sons in the hermitage's cemetery.

PROTOSYNCELLUS VICHENTIE MĂLĂU
Secu Monastery
(1887-1945)[327]

a. His Life

This great confessor, who shone like a morning star in our monasteries, he was born in the year 1887, in Ghidion Village, Stăniţa Commune, Neamţ County.

In the year 1894, when he was only 7 years old, his parents entered the monastic life, together with their three children. The father with his son Basil went to Secu Monastery, and the mother with her two daughters went to Văratec Monastery. In the year 1895, the father and his son left for the Holy Mountain. There, in the school of the Orthodox monasticism, they lived in harsh ascesis for eleven years, getting spiritually shaped by the best Athonite monks.

In the year 1906 they turned back to Secu Monastery, and in the year 1912 both of them swore the monastic oath. The father received the name Domitian, and the son received the name Vichentie. The mother became a nun under the name Migaluşa, and the elder daughter became a nun under the name Epraxia. In the year 1915, Monk Vichentie was ordained priest and appointed ecclesiarch and confessor to Secu Monastery. Between the years 1916-1918 he was sent as military priest to the hospitals for wounded military personnel. Later on (1927-1928) he reached to be abbot to the monastery where he became a monk. Between the years 1928-1940 he activated as serving priest to Agapia Monastery, becoming the most famous confess9or from Moldavia.

In the year 1940 he was transferred as missionary priest to Vasinova Monastery – Banat Region, where he continued the same apostolic activity, until the summer of the year 1945, when he moved to the Lord, mourned by many people. In February 1953, his boned were brough and buried next to the founders of Secu Monastery, where they have been preserved until today.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. One day the father of Vichentie told to his wife:

– I am going to go to monastery, in order to cry for my sins, for I haven't done anything for my soul.

- Don't you have mercy on me? The woman answered him. Are you going to leave me alone with three children? I too have a soul.

[327] According to the testimonies of the confessors from Secu, Sihăstria, and Agapia Monasteries, and of his disciples.

- Then we are going to go both of us. I am going to take our son with me, and you are going to take our daughters with you.

Since that they all of them went to serve to Christ, both the parents and the children reaching to be consummate monks.

2. When he was at the Holy Mountain, Father Vichentie asked his confessor:

- Tell me, father, what should I do in order to save myself?

- My son, if you want to save yourself, you will do the following things: ceaselessly pray with tears, uttering the *Prayer to Jesus*; eat once a day, always take vigil, and day and night do prostrations; do everything you do with commandment and blessing; do not ever miss the Holy Liturgy and the Seven Prayers; run to your death from committing bodily sins, from envy, and from the love for money.

3. The confessor also told to his disciple:

- You must know, my son, that you won't remain for a long time at the Holy Mountain, but you will soon turn into your natal country, with your father. There you will become a monk, you will receive the gift of the priesthood, and you will guide many on the path to salvation.

After a short while, that premonition came to fulfillment, Father Vichentie turned back to his country and reached to be a great adviser of souls.

4. His disciple, Protosyncellus Efthimios Tanase said about Father Vichentie:

- In the summer of the year 1917 he was gravely wounded on the front life. While in the hospital, a monk-priest was taking care of the patients. He was Hieromonk Vichentie Malau. I didn't know him. Before my surgery I confess my sins to him and, crying, I asked him: Father, will I escape this surgery with my life?

- Brother John, listen to me, he told me. Have faith in Christ that you will recover and you will soon come to Secu Monastery.

Here is a paragraph missing from the source text[328].

Do not do anything with disgust, or for money, or without blessing, or by speaking against it, so that we won't lose our payment on the day of the judgment. This is for "he who obeys with love, he officiates liturgy".

6. On some other occasion he told to his spiritual sons:

- All the monk's things are holy, for the monks is consecrated to God. That's why, the monk's work must be done with blessing, his work must be wise and seasoned with salt, his prayer must be clean and hot as a fire, and his monastic cell must be simple like a cave but holy like a church.

7. Protosyncellus Vichentie forbid the monks from fishing. Once his disciple told him:

[328] (E. l. t.'s n.)

- Father Abbot, allow me to catch some fish from the pond.

- Why do you want to kill the fish because of your covetousness?

- But why the disciples of Christ were catching fish from the Sea of Galilee? the brothers added.

- But are you the disciple of Christ? the abbot answered him. And the brother got ashamed of his words.

8. His disciples testified that Father Vichentie never judged anyone, regardless what sin he saw that one committing. But he immediately prayed and cried for the sinner.

9. Once a monk came to him and told him:

- Father Abbot, I have seen somebody eating forbidden food on fasting days.

- Don't judge! Don't judge, brother! the old man answered him. Maybe God has taken away his mind, and that's why he ate that!

10. One day the abbot saw two brothers talking to one another when in the pew, and he told them:

- Do not talk, brothers, while in the church! Not even the angels talk herein, and you talk?

11. They were telling about him that he didn't allow the monks to visit others' monastic cells, to walk through the monastery without a purpose, or to come to the church unduly dressed. And if somebody missed the religious service without a blessed reason, he gave penances to that one.

12. His disciples also testify about him that he always was the first to enter the church, and he was the las tone leaving the church. When he entered the church, he was walking fast, as somebody would wait for him. And when he was leaving the church, he was walking slowly, having his face gladdened and lightened.

13. They also testified that Father Vichentie never accepted money from people, when officiating the Holy Liturgy, neither was he talking to anybody, in order him to be able to talk only to God. He was to permeated by the fear of God and by joy, that he always shed tears when serving.

14. When the midnight drew close, the Abbot always knocked on the door of his disciple and told him:

- Get up, brother Gheorghe, let's go to the church, for it is eleven pm. Then he sang a glory until his disciple got up and they immediately left for Matins.

15. His disciple also said that, each morning, at five o'clock sharp, Father Vichentie rang the bell for getting up.

- Why do you ring the bell so early in the morning, your all-pious? some of them asked him.

- In order for the fathers and the brothers to get up to prayer on time, to do their program and monastic canon.

After he rang the bell, he knocked on the door of his disciple, telling him:

- Get up, brother Gheorghe, to prayer! Let's go, you dear son of your father, to praise the Lord. Lo, the birds sin outside and shame us up!

16. Once his disciple asked him:

- Why don't you sleep at night, Father Vichentius?

- What if the Bridegroom comes at midnight? Should I be caught sleeping? the old man answered. And his disciple benefited of his ascesis.

17. After Matins, Father Vichentie stopped in the middle of the church and asked:

- What saint do we have today? Have your read the life of the today's saint? So were fasting and praying the saints form yore, lo how the martyrs endured! But we, fathers, eat and sleep!

After he presented the life of the day's saint, he added:

- Lo, it is two thirty in the night. Let's now go to our monastic cells, read the Chapel of the Mother of the Lord, and then go to bed.

18. He sometimes told to his disciple:

- Brother Gheorghe, tonight come all of you to me!

When all of them were there, he talked to them some useful word from the Holy Scripture, form the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and form the lives of some chosen monks, until midnight, and he was teaching them the *Prayer to Jesus*, and he was advising them how to run away from the traps of the enemy, he was spiritually comforting them, and he was teaching them how to paint and how to sing on musical notes. In the end, he sang, alone, a praise, with a smooth and soft voice, and with his eyes in tears he told them again:

- Bothers, let's go to the church. The bell rigs for Matins.

19. His disciple also said that, if the Abbot saw a father or a brother sad and depressed, he immediately would ask him, gently:

- Why are you upset, brother? Do you need something?

Then he left what he was doing, he called that brother to his monastic cell, and he gave that brother a comforting word, or a good book, or money for buying some clothes, or something to eat, or something from the gifts brought by believers to the church, and then he let that brother go in peace.

20. Once hid disciple went to gather some hay on the mountain. While his disciple was away, Father Vichentie cleaned up hid disciple's monastic cell, he washed up the floor, he dusted the room, he whitewashed the oven, and he lit up the candle. In the evening, when the bother turned back form his task, the father told him:

- Look at what the monastic cell of a monk should like. Simple and clean like a church!

21. On some other occasion the disciple told to his spiritual father:

- You all-pious, buy some good clothing for yourself, for you are Abbot and the world see you!

- I don't deserve that! I don't deserve other clothes, Brother Gheorghe! Only if I was delivered of my sins in this clothing!

22. His disciple said about his abbot:

- Father Vichentie was a great ascetic. He often walked barefooted in the summer, or without wearing socks in his boots. He had only one good coat in

his monastic cell, which he wore it when attending the church. All his other clothes were worn out and patched, but always clean.

23. His disciple also said:

- I haven't seen in the monastic cell of Father Vichentie either a bed, or a pillow, or a blanket, or some unused clothes, but he had only a few books, a table, the candle lit, the cross, and the epitrachelion which he used for receiving confessions. I don't know how was he sleeping, neither how was he praying, but I always found him aware and with a serene face.

24. Protosyncellus Vichentie Mălău love the Church of Christ so much, that he tarried inside the church day and night. He alone was cleaning it up, washing the floor, adorning the altar, dusting the icons, painting the pews, cleaning up the wall painting, and whitewashing the walls on outside. His face was always gentle and full of joy.

25. One of his disciples said that, on one occasion, the prefect came to monastery accompanied by a few teachers. Father Vichentie was dressed up with a worn-out coat, and he was whitewashing the church.

- Where is the abbot? those people asked him. We would like to talk to him.

I am going to call him – told them Father Vichentie. Just wait for a moment!

But those people, understanding that he was actually the abbot, and because of seeing him so poorly dressed up, they immediately left.

26. Sometimes the people asked him:

- Father Abbot, where do you had the money from, for so many repairs to the church and to the monastic cells?

- By the mercy of God and with the help of the people, the father answered. If I have spent a thousand today, tomorrow will come two thousand instead. If I have taken out two thousand form the safe, on the next day I will find four thousand instead.

27. They said about him that during the night of 11th of September he was taking vigil, by himself, until morning, in the Holy Altar, in prayers and in tears, for the remembrance of Holy Martyrs Mina, Victor, and Vichentie. He was doing the same during other nights too, over the year.

28. They also said that on the first day of Easter, when everybody came to refectory with the icon of the resurrection, and the tables were full of presents, Father Vichentie sat at the head of the table, tasted for a few times, and then he uttered a teaching word for two hours. His speech was so sweet and living, that the fathers stopped eating and they were listening to him with tears.

29. Father Vichentie also told to them who asked him, that the red eggs symbolized the tears of the Mother of the Lord, which She shed on Golgotha, while Her Son was crucified.

30. When the believers visited the monastery, they knocked on the door of Father Vichentie and asked him:

- Father, we have come to the monastery to be administrated the Holy Unction, to pay for religious services, and to confess our sins. Whom have we to go to?

- I will take your confessions, my brothers – the old man answered them with love. Then he tarried with them for the whole night. He listened to their troubles, he took their confessions, he appointed them a canon, he comforted them with chosen spiritual words, and he rested them. On the next day he took them to the refectory, he himself served them food, he gave them bread for traveling, he accompanied them to the gate and, after blessing them, he set them free in peace.

31. The old men who knew Father Vivchentie, they said about him that he was teaching the people so beautifully that all of them who were listening to him were crying.

- My dears – he was saying – you have come from so far, with your sacks on your back, barefooted, over the hills, tired and hungry, to worship in the holy monasteries! You are welcome, brothers! May God count your steps…

At the departure, he told them also:

- Kiss, brothers, this land, for it is holy. Here lived so many pious ones, known only to God! And the believers, after bowing down, they went further.

32. A brother who had recently become a monk, asked Father Vichentie:

- You all-pious, what should I do in order I to be saved?

- Listen to me, brother, force yourself to fulfill everything you have promised, and you will surely be saved.

- Woe, Father, I get scared of the monastic oath!

- Do not fear, brother! Trust that you have received Holy Ghost. Star working step by step until you will become accustomed to the good deed. Try, in the first place, to have a clean conscience, so that nothing to reproach you at sunset. Then, guard your mind against the evil thoughts, fulfill with love any task and always say “Lord Jesus”.

So, my dear son, listen to me and you won’t be wrong. It is so how one works the field of the soul.

33. Another spiritual son asked him:

- Father Vichentie, what should I do in order I to be saved?

And the old man gave him a piece of paper which was written on:

- Confess your sings as often as possible; do your canon and your prayer program withing your monastic cell;’ ceaselessly utter the *Prayer to Jesus*; be obedient in everything and to everybody; love loneliness in order to be spares of hearing, seeing, lusting, criticizing, justly or unjustly; reckon everybody as saints.

Force yourself to do all of these and you will be alive. And, if you don’t do these, why have you sworn to, not being forced? What an incurable insanity is that of swearing without realizing what you are wearing for!

34. His disciples said about him that Father Vichentie never touched the Holy Table, except in cases of great need; and he didn’t allow to be place on the Holy Table anything except the holy things. When he was officiating the godlike

Liturgy, he was standing far from the altar, and he was praying keeping his hands crossed over his chest, and when reading the remembrance lists, he kneeled down next to the Holy Table and he prayed for everybody with tears.

35. Once, a priest brought waffle in the holy alter. Then the old man told him:

- Father, don't you know that according to the typicon it is forbitten one to bring waffle, cheese, or eggs to the holy altar? You should do about 200 prostrations for this. But I do not allow myself to give penances to priests. That's why I am going to do this penance.

36. When receiving the confessions of sins, Father Vichentie was very gentle and skilled, and he always stimulated the daring of the man and his hope in the mercy of God.

- Listen, you – the old man was saying – confess, here, in front of Christ, everything that burdens your soul. Do not hide anything, neither you feel ashamed of me for I too am a man and I am not allowed to be offended by your sins. So, my dear son, tell me everything you have mistaken and repent as a man, and God will forgive you, through me the sinner, according to His great mercy. Only you to leave the sin.

At the end, he gave them a little penance – prostrations, fasting, and giving alms.

37. His disciple said that Father Vichentie was very rarely taking the confessions from parishioner priests and from confessors.

- Listen, father, go to Father Ambrosius, from Neamț Monastery. He is the confessor of the priests.

- Why don't you take confessions form the priests? his disciple asked him.

- Eh, brother, it is the most difficult to take confessions from priests and from confessors! They have a great responsibility in front of Christ.

38. One day, the old man told to everybody:

- Fathers, lo that laypeople are coming to the monastery from far away, with their sacks full of presents. And we accept their gifts and let them go back empty. We don't give them anything in return. For, who among us prays, with fasting and with tears, for them? Or, who gives them advice and comforting words? Who is doing prostrations form laypeople? Woe to us, fathers! You must know that God will sue us!

39. In the year 1927, at the patron's day at Secu Monastery, there came many people. Father Vichentie received all of them with love, he rested them and he fed them; and he shared from the received presents to the servants, to the monks, and to poor people. Seeing that, the cashier of the monastery told him:

- Father Abbot, will you share everything? What will the monastery remain with, after spending so much on the patron's day?

- Don't worry, Father Efthimios, today we have celebrated the day of Saint John the Baptist. On its patron's day the monastery must not earn

money, but it must pray and give alms to everybody. That is a true patron's day!

40. His disciple said that on one New Year's Day, the community gathered to the abbotship to wish Father Vichentie good health and to receive his blessings. And the old man told them:

- Father and brothers, I should have served you with a glass of wine, according to the custom, by I haven't any. But I am not giving you that wine that kills your soul, but I am going to give you high words for the high ones are high up. May God help all of us to accomplish ourselves there.

After he spoke to them about the life and the teachings of Saint Basil, he ended by saying:

- Let's not despair, brothers, even if we mistake, but let's confess our sins and let's leave the sin and let's have hope. This is for God, as a good Father, he always waits for us with His arms open.

41. A famous abbot came to see Father Vichentie and they talked together about the salvation of the soul. At the end, the old man told him:

- Father Abbot, your holiness forces the monks to fast for two of for three days, even though some of them are unable to. Wouldn't be better if you let that according to their power and will? I don't do that. I gave them fasting but with the bread on the table. I think they will get a bigger reward. I teach them how to fast while having the bread in front of them. This is for "God loves him who gives willingly".

42. His disciple said about Father Vichentie that he sometimes went to the kitchen and told to the cook:

- Listen, cook enough food, for everybody; put oil as needed and boil the food well, to be good, so that the fathers won't speak against, neither will they get sick.

43. His disciple also said that the old man was regularly coming to the table, together with the fathers, but he was not eating. He tasted only a little food in the evening. He served others to the table he read a teaching word, and he looked, with love, at how everybody was eating. On occasions, the others told him:

- Please, your holiness, eat you too.

The paragraphs no. 44, 46, 47, and 48 are missing from the source text. The paragraph no. 45 is unreadable[329].

49. His disciple said that Father Vichentie never accepted money for taking the confessions of sins, or for any other religious services. Everything was for free, out of faith and out of love, as Christ commands us: "you have taken as a gift, you will give as a gift" (Mt. 10: 8). Also, he didn't accept money for remembrance lists at his monastic cell, but he told to the believers:

[329] (E. l. t.'s n.)

- Brother, take this money to the church.

50. To this great father many poor people were coming daily in order to ask him for alms. Immediately as somebody knocked on his door, Father Vichentie opened that door immediately, and he said:

- Woe to me, because Christ knocked on the door of my monastic cell and I have nothing to give for alms! And he immediately took whatever he found and shared it away. Either a towel, or a pair of socks, or a piece of bread. And if he had nothing at hand, he told to the poor man:

- Wait for me, a little, outside!

And he entered his monastic cell, took of his shirt, or he took off his boots, and then he got out and give that to the poor man, telling him:

- Take brother, at least this, because I have nothing else today!

In the end he added:

- Come to eat at the refectory. Lest you will leave hungry!

And he served that poor man with his own hands. Then he accompanied that poor man to the exit.

51. They said about him that he never wore new clothes, but only worn clothes, but his clothes were always clean. He sometimes had no other shirt, for he gave everything as alms. That's why he constantly wore at his neck a black scarf, reaching his waist, so that nobody could see that he had no shirt on him.

52. When Father Vichentie went to Tîrgu Neamț for buying necessary things for monastery, all the poor people from the streets gathered around him, children, widows, lame, blind, beggars. And his holiness gave them as alms the most part of the money he had on him. With the remained money he bought what the monastery needed and then turned back to the monastery.

53. His disciples said that in the summer of the year 1928, when he was appointed confessor to Agapia Monastery, he crossed the mountain wearing as luggage only his bag on his back, in which he had the Holy Gospel, the cross, the Euchologion, the epitrachelion, and a change of clothes.

54. They also said that Father Vichentie was sometimes invited to feast in the monastery. And he answered that invitation with love. After he blessed, he tasted the food for three times, and he only touched the glass of wine with his lips. And then he said:

- Thank you very much! I have eaten so well! May God to forgive the deceased!

- Stay a little longer, father, eat with us. Do not get up hungry from the table, the nuns insisted.

- I have eaten. Forgive me! I am going now, for Christ is waiting for me at my monastic cell! And he left immediately.

55. On one occasion, a believe came to the old man and told him:

- Father, that man gave me a lot of trouble. I can stand it any longer. Tell, me, what should I do?

- Listen to me, my dear. Do not allow yourself to be disturbed by that brother, for nothing, because not him, but the devil is to blame. So, do not break the tie of the love that is more precious than anything in the world.

56. On some other occasion a few monks came to see him and they told him:

- Father Vichentie, tell us a useful word.

- Fathers – the old man told them – Christ wont' ask us about anything else at the judgment, but only this: Why haven't we repent? Why haven't we cried for our sins? Why have we kept our candles unlit? So, strive yourselves, my dears, strive for repentance. For, lo, that nigh comes when nobody will be able to work anything. The death comes unannouncedly and it will find us in sins. Let be ready, fathers, let's be ready for the trip!

57. On one occasion a nun came to see him and asked him:

- You all-pious, a relative has come to visit us. Are we allowed to accommodate her in our monastic cell?

- Mother, listen to me. Do not ever accommodate laypeople on your monastic cell, but only at the guest house. This is because the monk's monastic cell is a church, it is a secret chamber, and it is a place for ascesis. And talking to laypeople banishes away the crying of the monk, it quenches the candle of the prayer, and it removed Christ from his heart.

58. If he noticed a layman offending the inhabitants from the monastery, he immediately told to that man:

- Listen to me, brother. You must leave the monastery before sunset, because here is fire. Here is a holy place, when hundreds of souls pray to Christ. Here the prayers and the prostrations do not stop, neither the mothers' candles got quenched. That's why you owe to enter here with humbleness, to walk slowly, to keep your eyes down, to not talk to anybody, and to pray, for the monastery if a holy place.

59. One day a few believers asked him:

- Father Vichentie, is it a sin eating meat on fasting days?

- Listen to me, brothers. Everything that delight the body is a sin. When the church forbids us from eating meat on fasting days, we owe to keep the fasting. I cannot give you permission to eat. And when the Church gives permission to eat everything, I cannot forbid you to eat. So, let's do as the Church teaches us.

60. His disciples said that Protosyncellus Vichentie usually ate very little, only that much that he needed to maintain his life. Everything he received as food, he shared it to the people form around him, and if something remained to him, he went to the poor nuns and told them:

- Mother, Christ has sent me to your holiness with something to eat. Please accept it in the name of the Lord!

61. The old man told, on occasions, to the wealthier nuns from the monastery:

- Hear what Christ says: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy". So, we will receive a harsh condemnation if we do not give alms. The

monk must eat only one kind of food and that one with restraint. Likewise, let the monk have only two rows of clothing – one for working and one for church – and those ones to be simple.

62. If a poor man came to see him and he had nothing to give him, he went to the nuns and told them with a begging voice:

- Mother, Christ has come to me and I have nothing to give him as alms! Please, lend me 100 units of currency, and I will give that back to you when I will be able to.

And the mothers, seeing his love for poor people, answered him:

- Take this money form me, father, and you won't need to give it back to us, for we too want to give alms to Christ.

Thus, the good shepherd, forced others too to give alms.

63. On some other occasion a monk came to ask the old man for a useful word, and the old man told him:

- Listen to me, father. Have your received something today? Share that today to everybody. Do not keep anything for the next day. Neither money, nor bread, neither two clothes. This is for Christ takes care of feeding you tomorrow too.

64. In one winter Nun Migaluşa – his mother – sew for him a row of new monastic clothing, made of wool. But, before he put those clothes on, a poor man and his wife came to the pious and asked him for alms. They have 10 children at home and they lacked everything. So, the father told them:

- Take these wool clothes. They are priestly clothes, but you can transform them in clothes for your children. They keep very warm in winter. I have had no use for them. We have everything we need.

- Thank you very much, father! those people told him and left.

His mother heard about that and said, sighing:

- Why have the father given away those new clothes, which were so good? What is him going to put on this winter?

- Do not be upset, Mother Migaluşa – the other nuns comforted her. God takes care of Father Vichentie.

65. Mother Laurentia, his disciple, said:

- Once, I had gone to Father Vichentie in order to confess my sins to him, and I found him washing up his clothes. He had his coat on him, but he had no shirt.

- Forgive me, mother, because of seeing me like this. I am washing my shirts and I have not others for change.

- Bless me father, for I want to wash those shirts for you.

- Well, mother, and the priest what else has to do?

66. His disciple also said:

- Father Vichentie dwelled into the house of the priests, together with his disciple, Protosyncellus Efthimios. And a lot of people were coming to confess their sins to him. And, in order his disciple not to get upset because of being disregarded, he was telling to the believers:

- Brother, some of you could go and confess to the father from next door. He too is a very good and skilled confessor.

67. Mother Laurentia told that this great confessor, with much craftsmanship, he succeeded in convincing the mothers who feared of receiving harsh penance still to come to him and confess their sins. When he saw some nun discouraged, he called another sister to him and told her:

- Take this oil and flour and give them to that certain mother, from me, for he is poor.

- Why do to do this, Ftaher Vichentie – Mother Laurentia asked him – because that mother had what she needs for a living.

- I am doing this in order to encourage her and to give her spiritual daring.

After a day of two, when he met that nun in church, he called her to him and he told her:

- Mother, your holiness is a good nun. You came to monastery a few years ago, you have raised disciples, you have been obedient, you come to church regularly, and you sing beautifully when in pew. You must not get discouraged, because getting discouraged is the work of the enemy. Hope for the mercy of God and come to priest. I am going to read you a prayer, I am going to receive your confession, and you will see how content you will feel yourself after that.

So was Father Vichentie gaining everybody's souls.

68. This all-pious father had also the gift of foreseeing. When a young brother came to monastery, he felt him, into ghost, if tat brother was to become a good monk or not. He summoned some of the brothers to him and told them:

- May God and the Mother of the Lord bless you, brothers, in order you to reach good monks and priests of the Church of Christ.

And to others, he told them:

- Brothers, you won't be able to stay into monastery. Here is tough. Take this money for the trip and go home. Obey your parents, learn a grade, and fear God. And everybody followed his advice.

69. Mother Laurentia said that a girl came one day to see her grandma who was a nun at Agapia Monastery. On the next day, the old nun went to Father Vichentie and told him:

- All-pious father, bless my granddaughter, for she is going home.

- God and the Mother of the Lord bless you, sister, for you will remain in the monastery and you will become a nun!

From then on, that girl remained in the monastery and she became a good nun.

70. Many ill people were coming to see Father Vichentie and ask him for prayers. Some of them got healed. The old man received everybody with love, he received their confessions of sins, and he administrated them the Holy Unction. But he felt with his ghost whether or not that sick person was going to be healed. That's why, he didn't want to change the decision of God. Before

leaving, he comforted the sick person and let that person know what was going to happen with him.

- How much do we owe to you, father, for the Holy Unction? the sick persons asked him.

- Let that go, and if you get healed, we will haggle! And he never took any money from anybody.

71. Once Father Vichentie got ill and he had not place to lay down, because he had no bed in his monastic cell. Then Mother Laurentia brought him a bed and a pillow and with beddings, and the old man lied down in it for a few days. After he got better, he told to the nuns:

- Thank you for the bed, for the pillow, for everything. You can take those back, now, for the priest has got healthy. Why to let anyone sleep on the floor because of me?

- No, you all-pious, we have bestowed it to you definitively. Keep it in your monastic cell.

- But if I keep it, the sickness will come again to me!

After a few days, he met a poor man and he gave that poor man the bed and everything that was on that bed. From then on, the father was never sick as long as he remained in Agapia Monastery.

72. On one occasion the old man told to Protosyncellus Efthimios, his disciple:

- Last night, after doing a few hundreds of prostrations, I sat for a little while, on the chair, in order to rest myself. After a few minutes, I felt that somebody plucked my rosary from my hand and threw them away. When I opened my eye, I saw in my monastic cell a group of devils, who were jumping and dancing. But immediately as I started to shout out at Christ, with tears, the devils vanished away.

73. Father Vichentie told to his disciple:

- If is good for the monk to remain a stranger for the whole his life. If not (…[330]). This is for so he promised to Christ.

74. The father used to tell everyone a useful word. Immediately as he remembered some building-of-soul word, he told it to the first nun he came across.

- Mother Evsevia, do you hear me? I have remembered a word. Let me tell it to you now, because you might not come across it.

At the end h concluded, saying:

- This is, maybe, my last word, my last blessing. Who knows if we reach tomorrow!

75. One day, one of his disciples asked him:

- How do you feel at Agapia Monastery, Father Vichentie?

[330] In the source text follows an illegible phrase. (E. l. t.'s n).

- Glory to God for everything! Do you know what keeps me here? The daily liturgy and the Holy Impartation! Otherwise, the temptations would surround me from all quarters.

And the disciple used the words of the old man.

76. Father Vichentie also said:

- He who searches for sweetening himself with bodily beauties is guilty as the fornicator is and, until he sets a border he cannot be imparted. And he takes even the waffle towards sin. Woe, and how many are those who think that lusting is nothing! But Christ says, assertively: "If you lusted, lo that you have already fornicated into your heart" (Mt. 5: 328).

77. He also said:

- The surest trap of the devil for the man is the food. "You have time for worshipping – he said – or to fast later, on the evening, tomorrow!". And keep postponing it until you die. Lo, so the man destroys himself, willingly, unrepented. Who is to be blamed?

78. On other occasions he told to his disciples:

- Brothers, you vainly confess your sins if you don't set up a border to your mistakes.

79. The old man told to his spiritual sons:

- Of, what an incurable insanity is to swear in front of the altar of Christ and in front of the whole world, that you will live for your entire life only into obedience, in patience, in restraint from drinks and from any bodily lusts and sweetening. And woe! after that oath, on that very day, you start trying to avoid obedience, to transgress the holy oath, and to daringly turn back to your life from before. But do not forget that this oath, on the day of the judgment, it will be your most awful accuser. Take heed that you will answer not only for yourself but also for all those who were offended by you, as Christ says Himself: "Woe to him through whom the offence comes" (Mt. 18: 7).

80. Father Vichentie also said these:

- Nobody ever saw our Savior Christ laughing, but everybody saw Him often crying. He was not crying for Himself, but for the whole world strayed into the deserts of the sins, where the enemies of the humanity live, stalking, not-sleeping, and searching, like some wild beasts, to tear apart and to swallow all those who are strayed into these deserts.

81. To those who talk when in the church, he told:

- The talking, the jokes, and the laughter into church are sins against the Holy Ghost, namely again the godlike power, because by that it is despised the holiness of the church and it constitutes an occasion to offend the public. And, even more than that, these ugly things have become today a custom inseparable from the church.

Woe, what a painful thing is, when ourselves despise what we have most holy – the Church – which we have inherited from Christ! About that, the Lord Himself says: "My house will be called house of prayer for all the nations, and you have made a cave of thieves of it" (Mt. 21: 13).

82. And, regarding the fasting, he was teaching his disciples thus:

- Without fasting, - namely restraint form food, from drink, and from evil thoughts and deeds – nobody among mortals can live a lonely monastic life, in absolute bodily cleanness and in full peace of the conscience. A nourished and rested body mandatorily defeats the ghost, it darkens the conscience, and it feel victim to all sorts of sins.

83. On other occasions, he taught this:

- Brothers, speaking and joking while in church resembles laughing at a tomb!

84. Father Vichentie also said:

- It is true that our Savior give to His disciples the power of tying and untying the sins – and through them that power crossed upon hierarchs and priests – but with the condition that the sins to be expiated through fasting, through prayer, through penances, through tears, and by setting up a border.

Well, today many people search for very forgiving confessors, and they even ask them not to give them heavy penances. And they even ask for a definitive exoneration. Some of them do not forget to immediately ask for being allowed to receive the Holy Impartation, regardless the gravity of their sins. And this, in order the world to think that they are worthy. OH, what an incurable insanity! The penances are made by Apostles and by other Saints and they must be applied to everybody, according to the person, according to the time, and according to circumstances. Christ Himself toiled, fasted, and he prayer and cries for us.

Oh, petrified and blind people, the Holy Impartation is a fire burning the unworthy!

85. And about those who are totally petrified when confessing their sins, he told them:

- Woe and again woe to those whoa re full of sins and who search for easily forgiving confessors and they steal those ones' blessing and brazenly they dare to receive the Holy Impartation, while knowing themselves as being unworthy of it. It would have been better to them if the had been born dead, for, decisively, they cannot be forgiven and their part will forever be that of Judah.

86. On some other occasions, the great confessor taught also this:

- Before going to confess your sins, examine your conscience for a long time and see that there are small mistakes which, often, they can become more harmful than the big mistakes. Then, write on a piece of paper everything you have mistaken and search for a skilled confessor, and not for one who forgives your more easily. This of because not wise confessor can disregard the canons of the Holy Fathers. This is for Christ and His saints, yesterday, today, and forever, are the same! So, after confessing your sins, ask yourself for the due penance and accomplish it immediately, because of not knowing the time of your death. Even if the confessor allowed you to receive the Holy Impartation, you won't hurry up, because it is fire and it burns. But, examine your conscience much and then receive the Holy Impartation only with a big fear.

87. Father Vichentie also said:

- The often confession of sins weakens the power of the devils.

88. He also said these:

- They who obey themselves to passions and to bodily sins, there they won't be forgiven by any means.

89. Once, the old man saw some sisters speaking-against in monastery, and he told them:

- Obey, mothers, without speaking-against, as to God. This is the monasticism. If not, the devil laughs at you and he will win you.

90. On some other occasion, seeing a nun gossiping the abbot, he told her:

- Who are you to judge the servant of God? She stands of falls to the Lord. And she will stand, for powerful is God to support her. But the servant of God – the abbot - owes too to be adorned with all the evangelical virtues, founded on the ground of the humbleness, judging without bias and with long-patience, "in order to take the payment for the calling from above".

91. Father Vichentie told to a nun from Old Agapia Monastery, who wanted to bring people to repentance forcedly:

- Mother Avsevia, why don't you observe the teaching of the Holy Gospel, that says this: "No one can come to Me if he is not drawn by the Father" (Jn. 6: 44)? So, each person, if not drawn and moved by the Holy Ghost, he will remain petrified as Pharaoh, whom God intendedly petrified his heart in order God to work miracles through him, so that God to be extolled through Pharaoh's petrifaction. So does God with every person. God doesn't call any person when you want, but when God wants. You torment yourself vainly, for the thoughts of God aren't like our thoughts.

92. He told to the same nun, also that:

- Have you sworn patience? Be patient! Do not look at what others do, for God wants you to take care of yourself. What do you want? To save the man forcedly? Have you forgotten what the monks did to Saint Simeon the New Theologian? How they kicked him out of monastery? Be patient, therefor, and do not oppose yourself to God.

93. On some other occasion the old man told her:

- Looking at what other do is a mistake. Do not get astray while wanting to correct others. But take care of yourself, for you have sworn for yourself. God takes care of everyone.

94. He told to the same nun:

- you will not be able to stay anywhere, neither will you have peace for saving yourself, if you are not silent like a corpse and if you do not endure to the blood. This is because, if you occupy yourself with saving others, you will forget about yourself.

95. Father Vichentie also said:

- Each time you judge your brother, you transgress the Gospel that shows the Lord crucified to you.

96. He also told to the same nun:

- If you do not decide to see all the people as saints, you will not be able to save yourself and you stay in monasticism vainly. I believe with the whole my heart that all the people are saints and that God saves them and sanctified them in a way that I cannot understand it, neither your holiness!

97. Father Vichentie also said:

- I assure you that he who hates, even rightly, his neighbor, he is so guilty that he deserves to be judged at the highest judgment court. And he who defames and smears his neighbor, he is like the people killers whoa re condemned to the hardest punishment.

98. He also said:

- There is no more painful thing under the sun, than a Christian who knows how to read btu he doesn't have the Bible in his house and he doesn't the Bible read daily, in order him to take gift and power out of that reading.

99. Before he left for Banat, two disciples came to see him – Hieromonk Clement and Monk Cleophas – and told him with many tears:

- All-Pious Father, you are going to leave us soon and we won't see each other in this life. Tell us a last useful word.

And Father Vichentie, putting his hand on the neck of Father Cleophas, and with the other hand knocking lightly in the table, he said:

- Listen, Father Cleophas, what the priest tells you. Lo my last word: patience, patience, patience! And when it seems to you that you have finished it, you will take it again from the beginning: patience, patience, patience!

- But for how long, Father Vichentie?

- All the way to the door of the tomb! Then, my dears, we will go to the Paradise's Garden. And there sing birds so wonderfully! And there are trees with flowers and with golden fruits! And eternally flourishing pastures. And there are springs with limpid waters! There we will see the groups of the saints. There we will hear the songs of the angels. There we will live forever together with our Lords.

Therefore, my brothers, let's meet in Paradise!

100. His disciple confess that while Father Vichentie had been officiating at Agapia Monastery the last Liturgy, everybody saw a pigeon over the Holy Table. Then the pigeon flew outside.

- What direction the pigeon has flown? the father asked as the end of the service.

- Towards West – the nuns answered him.

- So, I must leave for the West too!

101. on 26th of March 1940, Father Vichentie together with his disciple Hieromonk Efthimios Tănase left for Banat as missionaries. In the ring of the bells, the community of Agapia Monastery accompanied them all the way to the foot of the hill. Then, the old man, turned towards the nuns and told them:

- Nuns, this is enough! I thank you for so much love. Turn back to the monastery and do not forget about your monastic promises which you are going to be taken accountable for, in front of Christ. Forgive me! And then, after prostrating to one another, he blessed them and they left.

102. His disciples from Vasiova Monastery said about Protosyncellus Vichentie Mălău that there he lived in a deeper ascesis than he had done in Moldavia. He stood all the time within the church and at his monastic cell surrounded by hundreds, and sometimes by thousands of people. He took the confession of some of them, he comforted others, he advised others, and he prayed for all of them.

Then, as the evening had come, he withdrew himself into the forest at a secret place where he had a big cross. Then he was praying with tears and he was doing hundreds of prostrations until dawn when he came back to his monastic cell.

103. In the summer of the year 1945 the great confessor Protosyncellus Vichentie Mălău, after a short suffering, he yielded his soul in the arms of our Savior and he was led to his tomb by over ten thousand believers. Everybody cried for him and they covered him with soil with their own hands.

Up to today, peasants from Banat – Orthodox and Catholics – come in pilgrimage to Vasiova Monastery. They place candles and flowers on his tomb, they pray, they cry, they do prostrations, and then they kiss his cross and go back to their homes.

After seven years, the bones of this all-pious father, full of good fragrance, were moved to Secu Monastery. And his hands, which he committed the holy things and gave alms to the poor with, they were found whole and unharmed, as a sign that Christ counted him in the group of the pious fathers, for the holiness of his life and for his consummate mercy.

104. *Mother Euphrosyne, right and holy soul*[331].

I have received all your letters and I beg you not to get upset because I do not answer to anyone until I am pushed and urged by the Ghost of the Lord, for within me lived Christ and not me. He commands, and I, His servant, execute. Live your soul; in ghost and truth and whether the Ghost of the Lord urge you to write more often, you do that because it rejoices me. I am going to answer the things you have asked me about in a closed envelop.

105. *Clean and righteous soul.*

I have received and I thank you much for what you have in your thought and in your soul. But everything is being done with the will of God. To the man made of clay remains only to obey the godlike decision. Being so, let's give thanks to God and let's praise Him as long as we are on living on earth, wherever we would be, staying and being carried by the Holy Ghost, in a way that the man cannot understand.

I remember you with faith and I am sending you the blessing of the Lord, amen. Be healthy. Write again.

106. *Righteous and faithful soul*,

[331] Three letters wrote by Protosyncellus Vichentie to his spiritual daughters from Agapia Monastery, between the years 1944-1955.

I than you and to all the sisters form the house, five in number. I have done everything I ought to, and I am constantly praying and asking God, as you have asked me in your letter. So, you take heed only at yourselves, you live only inside yourselves, and not outside, and the humbleness with obedience to be your daily food. Remain with God while living. Amen.

Word about the Holy Prayer[332]

Our Savior embodied Himself in order Him to be to us a model of bodily and soul life on earth, and preparing for the life from beyond tomb.

My beloved one, deepen your cogitation at Martha who welcomes the Lord and at Mary who fells at His feet.

Bot sister have a great zeal at work, but their works are totally different. This is for Martha was serving, by preparing the earthly, bodily food, for the Lord; and Mary, by sitting at His feet, she was listening to His words. One was resting the seen One, while the other was serving to the unseen One, for he truly was both man and God, He Who was there. The same Master welcomed the zeal of both women. But Martha, tired by so much toiling, she asked the Lord to mediate and tell Mary to help her: "tell her to get up and serve You together with me".

And the Lord answer her: "Martha, Martha, you are taking care of and you strive towards many things, but Mary has chosen the good part which won't be take away from her". For we haven't come into the world in order to lie on soft beddings and to feed our belly, but I have come to feed you with the word of truth and with the sight of the mysteries.

So, He didn't stop one from the things she was working, and He praised the another for the good part she chose. Both women were working zealously but the soul part was more valuable, for it was a secret sight.

You, soul, choose what you want. If you want, serve in the name of Christ, as Martha did the earthly things. The Lord allows you, for he says: "for you did it to one of these little brothers of Mine, you did it to Me". This is for, either you welcome strangers, or you rest por people, or you help those who are in pains, in needs, in danger, or you serve sick people, Christ received all of those upon Himself.

And if you want to aspire to Mary who left the body's service and she gave her mind to the souly aspects, then you do that cleanly. Forsake you body, leave the working of the land and the cooking of food and the other similar things (during prayer) and sit down next to the Lord's feet and listen to His words. This is for the Lord's teachings strengthen the body's needs.

So, my beloved one, you have taken the examples and the proof. You chose what you want, either you to be a servant to the poor, or endearing the dogmas of Christ. And if you can do both those things, you will be rewarded.

[332] Copied after an original manuscript belonging to Protosyncellus Vichentie Mălău, preserved at Agapia Veche Monastery.

The Lord cherishes more the work of Mary. If you truly want to love Christ, you must forget about your body. And when praying, take heed not to ask some things instead of others. Not money, not human glory. You search for the kingdom of God firstly, and all the others will be added to you.

And two are the ways of the prayer: one of the extolling, with the humbleness of the mind, and the second of the request. While praying, do not immediately come to ask for something, because you will give up your appeal, by proving that you pray forcedly. Starting the prayer, forsake yourself and your wills. Leave the earth and raise to the skies. And when you pray do not wander with your mind here and there, but admit your smallness and your weakness and your narrowness in understanding. "For You have built us, and not ourselves. You are our God". Say that you are a sinner. Despite of not feeling this, you still must say it: "See, nobody is sinless, except God". This is why the Apostle says: "I don't know anything evil within myself". But this won't justify me to think about me that I am righteous. This is because Prophet David says: "After you will have done everything, say: We are worthless servants, for we have done what we have owed to do". And weigh yourself in again, because there is needed much humbleness to see another more honorable than you are. This is because you do not know who loved God more.

The Lord has built you, and He takes care of your salvation, and He knows each time whether is useful to you to be healthy or sick, rich or poor. But you ask for the Kingdom of God, for the rest will come by itself. And when you ask for something, insists much and do not get yourself discouraged. This is for who among you has a friend and goes to see that friend in the middle of the night and tell him: my friend, lend me three breads, for a friend from far away has come to me and I don't have what to feed him with. And that friend will answer you: do not bother me, for it is late, I am in bed, my children sleep, and it is dark, and I cannot give it to you. And if that friend does not give him bread for friendship, then he won't give him bread for insisting either. The Lord gives as example to be strong in faith and perseverant.

Do not say that you are a sinner and God doesn't listen to you. Aske for what you need, after prayer, and wait for that regardless how time will pass, do not despair but wait for it, for God will grant your request and you always ask working the good. This is because, if the prayer weakens and one pours alcohol over youth, the cleanness will be lost and the man will have been transformed. This is because, if the man indulges himself to his lusts, God won't help him.

If you sit indifferently to prayer, you will immediately run away from that place, lest you receive the wrath and the punishment from God instead of reward. This is for the Lord says: "Anyone who asks, he will take, he who searches for, he will find, and to him who knocks on the door, it will be opened" (Mt. 7: 7). This is for what else you want to receive except your salvation?

Learn yourself how to be patient. See how they summoned Abraham from the land of Assyrians and they promised to him the land of Palestine: "I will give this land to you and to your nation… whom I will multiply as the stars of the sky" (Gen. 15: 18). And he didn't protest because of being old and

because the promise was not fulfilled to him, as son, and to his nation. But he always remained strong in his faith. This was for his wife was getting older and his faith was getting younger. God does and transform everything as he wishes. When Abraham was naturally dying at an old age, the promise of God got resurrected. You follow Abraham's faith. But we pray for a year and then we cease. We fast for two years and then we stop. Therefore, let's not weaken, for He Who promised Himself to Abraham, He promised Himself to us too. "Come to Me you who are tired and burdened and I will rest you" (Mt. 9: 28). So, He promises us mercy. He came on earth for you and you don't believe His word?

We shy from taking up His yoke and to enter the narrow door. We prefer the sea of the sins.

You, when asking, you did not have faith, or you didn't ask what was beneficial to your soul; or you didn't persevere. This is for it is written: "For into your patience you will ern your souls" and "he who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Mt. 24: 13).

But you will say: God know the heart of those who pray. So that god doesn't need our request. For He is good, so that he pours rain both upon the righteous and upon the unjust... But you won't take the Kingdom of God without deeds and without perseverance. This is because you firstly must desire the things which you want to take and then to ask for them with faith, with patience, and with effort. This is for you will keep attentively everything you have taken with efforts, in order you not to lose it, for you know how much you have toiled for that. What benefited Solomon by taking the gift effortlessly? He lost that gift! So, do not weaken because of not having your request fulfilled quickly. This is because, he who has taken the talent and he buried it whole, was condemned only because of not trading it, how much more will be punished he who has lost the talent?

God does everything He know as beneficial to us. Let us only ask for that perseveringly. Do you see the parable with the widow and with the unjust judge, how the widow tames the judge with her perseverance?

Let us too always persevere. Amen.

Agapia Monastery – 1938

Protosyncellus Vichentie Mălău

PIOUS VITALIE THE MONK
The Holy Mount Athos
(1891-1945)[333]

This pious father was a great and secretive Romanian hermit from Mount Athos. He originated form Botoşani, and he became a monk at Neamţ Monastery. Being called by Christ to the spiritual life, Monk Vitalie took upon

[333] According to the witnesses of the Romanian monks from Mount Athos.

himself, from his youth, the yoke of the monastic ascesis, surpassing many with his fasting, with the secret prayer, with the tears, and with the taking of vigil.

Aspiring to the highest ascesis, in the year 1938 he left for the Holy Mountain and there, making a small shack to himself, he was living as hermit in the forests from around Caracalu Monastery which was founded by Petru Rareş. But the toiling of Father Vitalie was totally hidden into Christ. Nobody knew where he was dwelling, how he was praying, and to what spiritual measure he reached. Nobody saw him, sometimes for months in a row. Only during summer, he was working at Caralacu Monastery, from where he received a little food for subsistence. Then he withdrew to his much-wanted quietude.

The Athonite fathers who knew Father Vitalie say that he was always serene and lightened to his face, that he consummately kept his silence, that he never talked to anybody, that he reckoned himself the most sinner man on earth, and that he was a great worker of the Prayer to Jesus.

Sometimes, engulfed with tears and by the joy of the Holy Ghost, he said these words:

"Glory to You, glory to You, Jesus, the Son of God, for You have summoned me, the unworthy, to the monastic life and for You have brought me here, in the garden of Your Mother, so that I can pray in quietude, for the whole world!".

This loving-of-God monk, by knowing his death in advance, he told to the fathers:

- In three days, at the feast of the elevating of the Holy Cross, I am going to God! Then he confessed his sins, he received the All-Holy Mysteries, and on 14th of September[334] 1945, he rested peacefully, yielding his soul in the hands of God. The fathers buried him in the cemetery of Caracal Monastery.

Lord, rest our Father Vitalie with your saints!

MONK GALACTION ELIJAH
Hihăstria Monastery[335]

a. His Life

This improved monk originated in Pipirig-Neamţ Commune, being born to poor parents. In his youth he shepherded his village's sheep. Then, wanting to follow Christ, in the year 1918 he entered the monastic ascesis at Hihăstria

[334] There is the tradition telling us that the monks who die on 14th of September, the day of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, would be the most loved by God.

[335] According to the testimony of Archimandrite Cleophas Elijah from Hihăstria Monastery.

Monastery. In the year 1925 he received his tonsuring into monasticism from Abbot Ioanichie.

Here too he has the same blessed job. For 25 years he shepherded the monastery's sheep. In the autumn of the year 1946 he moved to the eternal life having his soul adorned with many good deeds.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. His disciple said that Father Galaction never ate before finishing his usual monastic canon. When the brothers called him to the table, the old man answered them:

- Forgive me, brothers, for I haven't fulfilled yet my today's duty towards God. So, how could I eat without fulfilling firstly my duty?

Then the father withdrew himself into the forest where he finished his prayers and his prostrations and only after that he sat at the table.

2. His disciple also said that his old man didn't eat on Wednesday and on Frida until evening, after the stars rose. Then the father marked himself with the sign of the cross, he asked everybody for forgiveness, he took wafer, and then after he ate quietly. Once his disciple asked him:

- Father Galaction, the day if long and your holiness are weak and old. Wouldn't be good for you to eat earlier?

- Brother Costache, listen to what Father Athanasius from Neamț Monastery told me. Once. A saint saw a dead being carried to his graves at his grave, and in front of the coffin and behind the coffin there were walking two beautiful angels. Then the saint asked them: "Who are you?". And the angels answered: "My name is Wednesday; and I am Friday! WE have come here at the command of the Lord to help this soul, who during his entire life fasted on Wednesday and on Friday in the honor of the sufferings of Christ".

Since Father Athanasius told me this story, I haven't eaten anything on these days, in order the holy Wednesday and the holy Friday to help me too at the moment of my death.

3. This humble father, if he saw somebody passing by his sheepfold, he immediately told his disciple:

- Go, brother Costache, and call that man to sit at the table with us. This is for here at the sheep there is a spring, and if you do not share from it, the spring will dry out. And if you give something from it, God will keep the sheep healthy and there will be no loss from where you give, for there is the blessing of God upon us.

4. His disciples also said that they never saw Father Galaction eating alone of secretly. If he received something to eat from the monastery, he didn't taste it until arriving to the sheepfold. There he summoned everybody and shared it equally with them.

- Why don't you ever eat alone, Father Galaction? The brothers asked him. And he answered them:

- It is a great danger for a monk to eat secretly! Then, with his heart full of peace, he added:

- Brothers, the love and the brotherhood surpass much the richness!

5. Father Galaction was the poorest monk in the monastery. He had only one row of vestments, a waistcoat, and some underwear. Once his disciple asked him:

- Your holiness, why don't you make for yourself some good clothing, as the other fathers have? And the old man told him:

- Brother Costache, I confessed my sins to a hermit whom I acme cross to on the mountain, as I was shepherding the sheep. That hermit told me: "father Galaction, you should have so much wealth as you can carry on your back, when you move from a place to another". Then he added to me: "Do not ever forsake your prostrations canon, say ceaselessly the Prayer to Jesus, and reconcile with everybody before sunset. If you keep all these things, God will make you partaker to salvation".

6. On some other occasion the old man encountered in the forest a holy hermit and he asked that hermit:

- Tell me, father, when the end of the world will be?

And the pious hermit answered him:

- Do you know when the end of the world will be? When there will not be path from neighbor to neighbor[336]!

Then they kissed good-bye and left.

7. On evening, Father Galaction used to ask the brothers to read from Paterikon and from the Holy Scripture, for he wanted very much to listen to the word of the Lord.

One day he told to his disciple:

- Brother Costache, please read me more from the Holy Scripture about Job's patience.

As the brother was reading, Father Galaction was shedding tears. Then he added:

- Lo, this was a great man because he didn't complain before God when God took from him so many sheep, so many cattle and children. But I the sinner, I am so weak in my faith that if a sheep gets sick or dies, I won't be able to eat that whole day.

- Why won't you eat, father? his disciple asked him.

- How can I have the courage of eating while seeing that god punishes the flock of sheep because of my sins?

8. In the autumn of the year 1946, after almost 30 years of obedience, Father Galaction broke a leg. As he was lying in his bed waiting for his demise, he heard that a monk called Nazarie died. So, he told to the abbot, with tears in his eyes:

- Please, Father Abbot, do not bury Father Nazarie without me. Do not spend twice. Tomorrow evening at 6 o'clock I too will leave this life. On the second day, at the prophesized hour, he yielded his ghost in the hand of the lord. On that day he turned 64.

[336] Namely, when there won't be love among people.

So ended this son of the obedience!

MONK GERVAIS GAŞPAR
Sihăstria Monastery
(1925-1948)[337]

He originated form Iaşi. After graduating a few years of secondary school, he attended the school for churchly singers from Neamţ Monastery and he embraced the monastic life. He had a clean soul and he was singing angelically. Later on, he got sick, and he was appointed to shepherd the monastery's sheep for a year. There he read the words of the Holy Fathers and he started learning the Prayer to Jesus. His heart was engulfed by a great spiritual peace. He loved the quietude and the silence. While in the church he was staying motionless for four hours in a row, and he was so infused by the sweetness of the interior prayer that he didn't even notice when the religious service drew to an end. ON occasions the brothers asked him:

- How do you feel in the church, Father Gervais?

- I feel myself like in heavens! He answered. The fathers seem to me like some angels, and the saints form the icons float in the sky!

Thus, everybody benefited of his words and settlement.

In the autumn of the year 1947, Brother Gheorghe Gaşpar came to Hihăstria Monastery. He was not a monk yet. Everybody loved him for his gentleness and for his humbleness. Hew was singing so beautifully in pew that he was making them shedding tears. And while not singing, he was secretly praying to Jesus. At the end of the religious service, he seemed in ecstasy. One of the fathers woke him up, telling him:

- Brother Gheorghe, let's go to the monastic cell for the vigil has ended!

One day he told to the Abbot:

- I want to become a monk! I want to be myself as well counted among the group of the monks!

The fathers made him monk. They felt that God was calling him. He was suffering.

On 5th of October 1948, the good ascetic asked for being administrated the All-Holy Mysteries. The fathers brought him to the church and they imparted him. Then, they told him:

- Father Gervaise, sing an Axion to the Mother of the Lord, as you were singing back in time!

And he sang with an angelic voice, full of joy, the Axion "You Are Truly Worthy". Then, after kissing the icon of the Mother of the Lord and after asking

[337] According to the testimony of Archimandrite Cleophas Elijah, former Abbot of Sihăstria Monastery, between the years 1945-1949.

everybody for forgiveness, he went back to his monastic cell. After three hours he yielded his soul in the hand of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Pious Fathers From the Second Half of Century XX

PROTOSYNCELLUS ANTIM GĂINĂ
Secu Monastery
(1894-1974)

a. His Life

Father Antim was a monk with a deep spiritual living and one of the most chosen disciples of the great Confessor Vichentie Mălău.

He was born in Prisăcani Commune – Iaşi County, and he embraced the monastic life since his youth, together with his father and with grandfather. IN the year 1920 he received the monastic schism at Secu Monastery, and one year later he was found worthy of the level of the priesthood. Between the years 1921-1928 he was priest and confessor in the monastery where he became monk. Then, for three years, he was parishioner priest in Plotun Village – Pipirig Commune. And between the years 1934-1956 he was confessor at Agapia Monastery.

Then he withdrew himself again to the monastery where he became monk, and in the year 1974 he passed away peacefully, in deep humbleness and self-rejection.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. His disciple say that Father Antim wanted very much to live in ascesis on Mount Athos. So, he told to his confessor

- Father Vichentie, I want to go to Mount Athos.

- I won't give you my blessing, the old man answered him, for you won't be able to live there.

But, after Father Antim insisted much in his request, he told him:

- Well then, go there. But you must know that you won't stay for a long time at Mount Athos, and when turning back you will be run over by a train.

After a few months, Father Antim came back to his country. And at Turnu-Severin, when crossing the railroad, a train suddenly appeared, and Father Antim escaped with his life by lying himself down so that the train crossed above him and didn't hurt him, by the prayers of his father.

2. In the year 1928, Father Antim was sent as missionary priest to Pipirig Commune, in order to correct the stylist believers who refused to obey the church. At the beginning, Father Antim didn't accept that. Then, after being advised by his confessor, he accepted that task and he totally renewed the spiritual life in Plotun Village. This was for the people from there saw the gentleness and the holiness of his life, so that they turned themselves back into the bosom of the Church of Christ. He introduced in that village an atmosphere of Christian harmony and union, as one rarely could find elsewhere. Then, he taught many how to fast, how to give alms, and how to secretly work the Prayer to Jesus. Even today, there are old people living this life of prayer and of secret joy.

3. At Agapia Monastery he was, also, a priest pierced by the fear of God and a much-sought confessor. He always reckoned himself as unworthy of the

mystery of the Priesthood and he was shaken at the godlike Liturgy. When serving in the church, he was spending his time only in fasting and in prayers and he never spoke to anybody.

4. As confessor, Father Antim was receiving the confessions only of those believers who really wanted themselves to be saved. He paid a thorough attention to the thoughts and he asked his spiritual sons to love mainly the silence, the obedience, and the Prayer to Jesus. Because of that, he had only a few disciples, but with their external settlement and with their inward work they wee more advanced than others.

5. His disciple say about Father Antim that he was removing from himself those who were tarrying in the same sins and who didn't fulfill their penances.

On of his disciples was speaking too much. The old man gave him as penance to speak less and to pray. Seeing that that disciple didn't obey him, at the third confession of sins Father Antim told him:

- Brother, now you are talking more than before! That's why I am no longer receiving you at confession.

6. They also said about him that if somebody had asked him for a useful word he thought deeply and he answered with difficulty. On occasions, he postponed the answer for the next day, and he strengthened his answer with quotes from the Holy Scripture and form the Holy Fathers.

7. This father was very self-denying and rejecting any sort of material goods. He didn't accept any gift from the believers in his monastic cell. Neither money, nor food or clothing. Everything he was offered he gave that to the community and to the poor. Sometimes he ran after the poor and shared them everything he found as more than needed in his monastic cell.

8. The fathers say that the old man didn't receive anybody in his monastic cell, except the abbot and his disciple. Neither he wanted to enter somebody's monastic cell. But he knocked on the door and he waited outside. Abd his word was always wise, short, and very gentle.

9. When in church, Father Antim stood in the back and he never sat in the pew. He permanently kept his look downwards, he was uttering the Prayer to Jesus, and he kept a deep silence. And he entered the Holy Altar only when serving and then he always stood facing towards the holy sacrificial place.

10. Father Antim was a profound worker of the Prayer to Jesus. He bore in his soul secret joys, unknown to the many. That's why he was not tempted by anything from outside: either by flowers, or by songs, either by clothes, or by food, either by restring, or by the praises from the people. This was because his heart was wounded by the love of Christ.

11. This humble father never looked anyone in their face, neither he condemned somebody, nor he allowed somebody to gossip his neighbor. Only when rebuking his disciples, he looked them in their face for an instant. And then he let them go.

12. His disciples say that the old man never entered his monastic cell when troubled or when somebody was upset with him. This was because his

soul didn't have peace and he was unable to pray. But he went around his monastic cell for a few times. And then he asked for forgiveness him whom he upset. And after entering his monastic cell he punished himself with fasting and with prayer up to three days, until he appeased his conscience.

13. His disciples also say that Father Antim was very ascetic. He ate only vegetables, once a day, with much restraint. And wine, cheese, and milk, he tasted only a few times a year. He wore old and poor clothes, he never lit the fire in his monastic cell, and he had no other personal possessions, except a waistcoat and three books: *The Book of Hours*, *The Book of Psalms*, and *The Paterikon*.

14. Another ascesis of Father Antim was the taking of vigil for the whole night. The fathers say that the old man never slept in a bed. After finishing his evening prayer, he made hundred of prostrations and then he napped for one or two hours, kneeled, under the icons. When he woke himself up, he continued with his midnight prayer and then he napped again for an hour, under the icons.

15. Once, he spent his night at Tg. Neamţ, at a spiritual son of his whom he loved very much. So, after he comforted everybody with chosen words from the Holy Fathers, his host made the bed for him, and he left him alone in his room. ON the next day the bed was totally untouched. Father Antim took vigil for the whole night before the holy icons.

16. The monks also say that at night the monastic cell of Father Antim was permanently lightened, and one found him at prayer regardless the hour. On occasions, when he was burdened by sleep, he went out and went around his monastic cell for a few times, and then he went back in.

17. During his last ten years of life, the old man no longer served the Holy Liturgy, but ne never missed from the church. Once, one of his disciples asked him:

- Father Antim, give me a last word before us parting with one another.

And the old man told him:

- Do not ever miss the church's service!

18. Reaching 80 years old and getting sick, Father Antim passed away on 29th of August, when they were celebrating the patron of the monastery, right during the Holy Liturgy. He left besides him a piece of paper with his confession, asking everybody for forgiveness and for prayer.

Lord, rest Father Antim with Your righteous ones!

PROTOSYNCELLUS CALISTRAT BOBU
Vasiova Monastery – Banat
(1900-1975)

Protosyncellus Calistrat was a famous missionary priest in Banat. He originated from Burdujeni Commune – Suceava County, and he became monk at Sihăstria Monastery, where in the year 1925 he took upon himself the yoke of Christ and in the year 1931 he was found worthy of the gift of the holy priesthood. And he was committing the holy things in Sihăstria Monastery, with much zeal and fear of God, for 12 years.

In the year 1945 he was sent as missionary priest in Banat. There he founded a new monastic settlement - the Timişeni Monastery for nuns (1945) – and he renewed the spiritual life in the Săraca, Partoş, and Vasiova Monasteries.

For 33 years, Father Calistrat was like an always lit torch for the monks and for the believers from Banat. He was a true shepherd, confessor, and father to everybody. He loved the most the church and the prayte4r. Day and night he was tarrying in front of the Holy Altar. He was officiating the Holy Liturgy with joy and with tremble, he was receiving confessions and comforting the people, he was confessing and defending the right-faith, and he was praying for everybody.

For his humbleness and for the gentleness of his heart he received from God the gift of the healing and of banishing away the unclean ghosts from within people. And there were no few people receiving from him health and relief. That's why the local believers honored him as a true spiritual father of Banat.

In the spring of the year 1975, Protosyncellus Calistrat passed away, peacefully, on the day of the Holy Easter, and he was buried next to the church of Vasiova Monastery.

ARCHIMANDRITE DOMETIE MANOLACHE
Rîmeţ Monastery – Alba County
(1924-1975)

a. His Life

Pious Archimandrite Dometie was a skilled confessor of Rîmeţ Monastery and a very valuable missionary priest of the Romanian monasticism.

He was born in Bălăneşti Commune - Buzău County.Wanting to serve the church of Christ, he studied at The Theological Seminary from Buzău, between the years 1945-1949 he studied theology, and then he became monk at Prislop Monastery – Haţeg County. Then, after he received the priesthood, and he was abbot and missionary priest, for ten years, in villages and

monasteries from Transylvania, as: Prislop and Afteea – Haţeg County, Piatra Fîntînelor – Năsăud, Dragomireşti – Maramureş, and Ciolanu – Buzău.

In the year 1959 he settled himself down, as confessor, at Rîmeţ Monastery, and as missionary priest through the Romanians' villages from Apuseni Mountains. After 26 years opf total self-giving and serving the monasticism and the Church, Archimandrite Dometie moved to the eternal resting, in the summer of the year 1975.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. This tireless monk and priest of the Church of Christ lived a chosen spiritual life, and he was heralding the Gospel to those who didn't understand it, and he sacrificed his body and his soul for others' salvation. For 20 years he confessed and defended with much zeal the Orthodox faith in Transylvania - a province struck by sects - as a true apostle of our days.

2. His disciples say that he strived much in the villages where he served, in order to bring the divided Christians back to the stable of the Church of Christ, teaching them that we all are one in Christ and we have a faith, a baptism, and a motherland – the Kingdom of God.

Thus, he brought back to the Mother Church many stray sons.

3. Father Dometie confessed the Orthodoxy not only by word, but also by deed. This was for he was a true disciple of Christ. At his parental words he added many alms, prayers with tears during the day and at night, kindness, patience, deep humbleness, and total love. Through all of those he was conquering the hearts of the believers, he was gaining the weak to faith, he was shaming the blasphemers, and he was sowing everywhere joy, unity, and hope in salvation.

4. Pious Dometie was also a tireless servant of the Holy Altar. He was permanently tarrying in the church, he was officiating the holy religious services with a great faith, he was preaching according to the program and outside program, he was rebuking and alleviating everybody, he never missed from the Holy Liturgy, and he was coming out from the religious service enlightened at his face.

5. His disciples also say that Father Dometie was a very sought confessor and a skilled adviser of souls. He had spiritual sons who were obeying him and who were living according to his advice. Especially on fasting period and on holydays they were coming to the monastery, they confessed their sins, they receive the Holy Mysteries, they asked for blessing, and they were turning back, comforted, to their homes.

6. As long as Father Dometie was missionary priest and abbot in Transylvania, he renewed the spiritual life in every monastic place, organizing well the house of God. In any monastery he left behind beautifully adorned churches, religious services according to the rule, new monastic cells, numerous spiritual sons, and much love and harmony.

7. What crowned the soul of Father Dometie was his spiritual activity brought by him all the way to self-sacrifice, at Rîmeţ Monastery, from Apuseni Mountains. He is a great founder of this ancestral place. During the two decades of ascesis and patience, of humbleness and of self-giving, of joys and of tears, at Rîmeţ Monastery, Father Dometie left to the Romanian monasticism a well-organized community of 40 nuns, a community founded on obedience and on love.

8. His spiritual sons say that Father Dometie was the soul of Rîmeţ Monastery. He was daily officiating the Holy Liturgy that was attended by the whole community. He was daily surrounded by monks and by laypeople, by healthy and by sick, by all kinds of people who wanted to see him and to talk to him. And he was sacrificing himself, with a great love, for everyone, by comforting, by resting, and by feeding everybody. Then he shared, benevolently, his last slice of bread, the last place for sleeping, his last shirt he had in his monastic cell. And the father, with a reconciled thought, was napping for a few hours in the church, or outside on the corridors.

9. Father Dometie was teaching the people and the nuns with much spiritual authority, but in the same time with gentleness and with wisdom. Once he told to one of the nuns:

- It is not a great thing to be literate and to say many words. God asks from us good deeds and a clean heart.

10. On some other occasion he told to the nuns:

- Mothers, let's break our tie to the sinful pleasures, and let's take care of our holy monasticism. This is for "he who sets his hands on the plow's horns and looks behind, he is not worthy of Me" – says the Savior (Lk. 9: 62). May our heart to merge with the heart of Jesus Christ. Let's burn ourselves for the love for God as a candle burns in the candlestick. Then he concluded with the words: "The zeal for Your house, Lord, will consume me" (Jn. 2: 17) and he immediately started shedding tears.

11. He once told to his disciples:

- Nothing in the monk's live if more honorable and more resting that to know how to fulfill any task, without any resistance. Then he concluded, saying:

- Believe me, that I am happy!

12. On some other occasion he also said:

- If I could revise my entire written texts, I would summarize them to a sole phrase: Believe, hope, humble yourself, and love Jesus Christ! Of bearing these words consists the whole mystery of our salvation and of our happiness.

13. He was teaching the nuns from the monastery like this:

- Mothers and sisters, our life must be a continuous prayer. I am discontent with your holiness that you do not serve and that you do not sing to God more zealously. This is for we must burn for His love. We are not in favor of long prayers while having our mind scattered. But let's make short prayers,

but during those moments our being, our mind, our heart, and our will to be united with God through love.

14. He also told them:

- He who thinks that he comes to monastery to live more comfortably and carelessly, that one is wrong, because of not knowing the scriptures of the monastic life, neither the great mystery anchoring the life to heavens.

15. Then he added:

- The light aura which the whole frame of the monastic life is presented, it is godlike, and blessed are those who remain within this frame until the very end, without any compromise. Are three times happy for they have become worthy of the non-withering crown of the glory and they haven't lived on earth for nothing. They are like the trees planted on the banks of the waters. Upon those the Ghost of God will really rest Himself and the entire Holy Trinity will make for Himself a dwelling place within their souls.

16. Father Doemtie also said:

- Only to some like those their life is happy, to whom from their monastic childhood the godlike gift of the total bodily and souly cleanness has been winged. To them there's nothing difficult and there's nothing unclean. This is for Saint Paul says that to them who are clean everything is clean and holy. To them nothing is difficult for they can do everything in Jesus Christ Who is eternally with them.

Our Lord wants us to be entirely His. Whole to mind and whole to body.

17. After a total ascesis and self-giving like these, Father Dometie was called to the eternal resting. So, after officiating the godlike Liturgy and after giving to everybody the last teaching, while he was carrying, on his back, food for the monastery, accompanied by the community, he lied down having his eyes pointed at the sky and he yielded his soul in the hands of Christ. It was Sunday, 6th of July 1975.

So lived and so sacrificed himself Father Dometie, the confessor of the mountain people from Apuseni Mountains[338]!

BISHOP CAESAR PĂUNESCU
Of the Lower Danube
(1888-1975)

a. His Life

Pious Bishop Caesar Păunescu, who shepherded the Bishopric of Constanţa and of the Lower Danube for 29 years, was one of the most enlightened figures of Romanian hierarchs form the second half of the Century XX.

[338] "An Early Departure", in *The Romanian Telegraph*, no. 35-36, Sibiu, 1975; the confessions of his spiritual sons and his personal correspondence.

He was the son of believer parents - his father was called Thomas and he was a teacher, and his mother was called Jordan – from Dobrotetşi Village, Amărăştii de Sus Commune, Dolj County and he was called from a young age to serve the Church of Christ. After graduating the seminaries Saint Nicholas Seminary from Rîmnicu-Vîlcea and Central from Bucharest, and then The Faculty of Theology, he earned his university degree in the year „1911 and then he totally dedicated his life to God.

Guided by the Holy Ghost, he renounced to the passing things and he entered the monastic ranks in the year 1914, being tonsured in monasticism at the Huşi Eparchy, on behalf of Dobrovăţ Monastery. Then he became archimandrite of the eparchy and venerable servant of the Episcopal Cathedral of Huşi, until the summer of the year 1929. They who knew him and his disciple confess that Archimandrite Caesar was a very distinguished monk, correct, humble, loving of prayer, and never missing the church's religious services. He observed, with holiness, the commandment of the obedience, the program of the religious services, and the prayer rule in his monastic cell, as also the advice of his confessor, and he was himself a skilled confessor. He was officiating with much piousness the religious services and he had the gift of being a good confessor, so that many were coming to see him and to confess their sins to him.

In the autumn of the year 1944, Archimandrite Caesar Păunescu was chosen, by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church and ordained bishop of Constanţa and of the Lower Danube, a task he bore with a great dignity and self-bestowing for the Church of Christ. The good shepherd shepherded the speaking flock for over a quarter of a century, he ordained hundreds of priests, he restored and renewed tens of churches, he undertook canonical visits through cities and county parishes, and he comforted many crushed souls. The main deeds crowing the top of the head and the soul of Bishop Caesar were these: much piousness and correctitude while officiating the church's religious services, he gave many alms of the poor, to the peasants, to the deprived students, to all the people who were in need and in suffering. He took much spiritual care for the individual prayer, for deprived monks and priests, for the poor churches, for anyone who knocked on his door and asked him for material or moral support.

During the last two years of his life, Bishop Caesar lived at the eparchial center from Galaţi as a true hermit, in total withdrawal, in silence, and in humbleness, in prayer, in fasting, in giving of alms, and in waiting with trust for his moving to the eternal life.

Burdened by days and adorned with many good deeds, on 30th of October 1975, Pious Bishop Caesar Păunescu yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hands of the Great Hierarch Jesus Christ, being buried next to the cathedral.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Bishop Caesar of Lower Danube was chosen by God, fron his childhood, to take upon himself the good yoke of Christ and to fulfill the high mission as hierarch and as souls' shepherd. As steward of the grace of the Holy Ghost and first-standing of this eparchy, the gentle bishop was characterized especially by an exemplary spiritual life, by modesty, and by consummate rejection of the earthly things.

2. Among other virtues, Bishop Caesar love the most the prayer which he done it according to a monastic rule in his monastic cell, being him in the same time always present at the church's religious services. Then he was fasting very much, knowing that the prayer without fasting won't reach easily the throne of the All-Holy Trinity. He spoke only a little, he read much, he gave parental advice to everybody, and he gave his love as alms to everyone. He wore simple clothes, and he didn't search for praise and for honor from people. He knew how to speak shortly and wisely, and he knew how to comfort the people hit by troubles. He knew how to mainly endure everything. Thus, he was fulfilling with his deeds the Lord's words saying: "*Your word to be seasoned with salt*" (Mt. [339]), as also the word uttered by Saint Cyprian of Carthage: "We don't speak nicely, but we live nicely".

3. When he was called to consecrate churches in the eparchy, he went with a great joy, and his heart was joyful seeing himself welcomed by believers carrying flowers and lit candles in their hands. After officiating the religious service of the consecration as also the Holy Liturgy, he uttered a word of teaching, he blessed the people, and he left for other churches, where he was expected to come, without accepting any gift from anybody. And if the priest and the parishioners invited him to a banquet, the good shepherd tanked them wholeheartedly for their love and he added:

- May God bless your faith, your prayer, and your sacrifice. By seeing your love, I feel myself nourished and satiated. I don't want to bother you also for the bodily food!

4. In the sermons of His Eminence he was urging the believers firstly to remain steadfastly in the stable of the Orthodox Church founded by Christ, that, for almost 200 years, it has been leading the people on the path to salvation. Then, he urged the believers to pray to God as much as possible and to never miss the church's religious services, and they to raise their children in the fear of the Lord, to live in love with their fellow humans, and to obey their spiritual shepherds and to regularly confess their sins, in order they to be found worthy of receiving the Holy Impartation.

5. On occasions he urged the believer like this:

- Saint Apostle Paul reckons our earthly life as a competition and as a race on a stadium, in order to gain the crown of the victory (1 Cor. 9: 24-25). This crown for us is the salvation of our soul. This crown it doesn't come on its own, but it is achieved with much effort and with zeal, because not crown of

[339] Unidentified. (E. l. t.'s n.)

prize comes without working. Likewise, the "Kingdom of God is taken by force and them who force themselves, they kidnap it" (Mt. 11: 12). This crown doesn't consist of words but of deeds, supported on love towards all the people. Therefore, we too must obey the rules of the spiritual life, with joy, and not sighing. Let's guard the ghost of the Gospel and live it as our good Savior has taught us. For He has given His life for our salvation and for serving us as a role-model for us to follow.

6. On other occasions he said in his sermons:

- God has bestowed us what was the most precious thing: the salvation. Therefore, let's answer Him with what we have the most precious: our clean love of our soul. Let's love God with the whole our heart and with the whole our soul, for He is the Father of all of us, and through Him we are what we are. He called us to spiritual life and he adorned us more than everything else, when he sown within us the glorious image and His likeness, and he has made us masters over everything existing on earth. Also, we owe to love our fellow human on the same measure which we love ourselves to, for all of us are the sons of God and brothers amongst us.

7. On some other occasion he told to his spiritual sons:

- To us there cannot be any bewilderment, no search on any other direction. The road of our life is marked by God Himself. He is the One serving the Gospel, the Church, and the good, forever being our brother in our common will. That's why, as spiritual father of yours, I am urging you, my beloved ones, to walk this road trustfully and thus you won't ever lose the path to your happiness and to your salvation.

8. On some other occasion he also said:

- Our personal happiness always depends on the general happiness. Likewise, also our salvation always depends of the report between us and our fellow humans, on how much good we have done, and on how much love we have shown.

9. In one of his pastoral letters he taught his souly sons:

- The death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ remain forever an urge to and a taking heed at the way we much walk the path of our life in, which is open to each of us, as we want, towards death or towards life. The life is all the good deed tending towards the common good and towards the Christian consummation. And death is not only that which our earthly life is ended with, but death is also living into sins, the life spent into the darkness of the nescience, the life having no useful spiritual preoccupation. This is because, whether the human life has not useful purpose which to tend to, or an ideal which to aim at on a daily basis, and even with sacrifices when needed, it will have not price. Anyone who does not do likewise, it means that he is a fruitless tree and he lives his death while still being alive.

10. Regarding the raise of children he was teaching the believers:

- Let's come from Baby Jesus to our children. They are our hope, they are the blessing of od for the strengthening of the family and of the world's future. Christ dwells within each child and He asks us to take care of him.

That's why, as the holy family, as the shepherd, and the Magi, and as those who supported Him. Let's us too to take care of our children. They need our love, of their parents; they need our work and our sacrifice, in order to prepared them for life, so that they will be good Christians and useful to society, and let us serve to them as role-model of living.

PROTOSYNCELLUS NICODEMUS MĂNDIȚĂ
Agapia Monastery
(1889-1975)[340]

a. His Life

Protosyncellus Nicodemus Mândiță was a skilled defender of the Orthodoxy and an unmatched missionary monk in our contemporary monasticism. This all-pious father was born in Buneşti Village – Argeş County, to believer parents. Between the years 1916-1918 he took part to the WWI, and in the year 1920 he entered the monastic ascesis at Măgura Hermitage – Bacău County. In the summer of the same year, he was found worthy of receiving the gift of the priesthood.

Between the years 1921-1923 he was a missionary priest in Frumoasa-Village - Bacău County. Then, for two more years, he was confessor at Giurgeni-Roman - Nuns Monastery. Between the years 1925-1935 he served as missionary priest in Transylvania, in the Pîclişa Village – Alba County, Hărmaşul Ciceului and Leurda Gîrboului Villages – Cluj County.

Between the years 1935-1945 he was confessor at Agapia Monastery. Then, for 17 more years, he was confessor at Văratec Monastery. His last years, 1962-1975, he spent them at Agapia Monastery in quietude and in prayer, passing away, peacefully, aged 86.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. This pious father had a highly spiritual living since an early age, loving the most the prayer, the fasting, and the reading of the holy books. For that everyone benefited of his wisdom.

2. When he entered Măgura – Tg. Ocna Hermitage, the abbot saw his obedience and he made him monk immediately. Then, seeing him gentle and skilled at the Holy Scripture, he made him priest and soul shepherd. And he was teaching the believers so nicely, that people were coming from far to receive from him a comforting word.

3. The Frumoasa-Moineşti Village was a small village, lacking any priest, and divided by sects. For three years as he was parishioner priest there, Father Nicodemus profoundly changed the spiritual life of the believers. In the first

[340] The teachings of Protosyncellus Nicodemus Mândiță have been taken from the books written by him and from his disciples who are still alive.

place, he turned to Orthodoxy all the divided ones. Then he combated, with much power, the immorality, the drunkenness, the family quarrels, and he abolished all the pubs ana d he strengthened the unity, the good-faith, and the decency among everybody. And he did all of these on three ways through an exemplary personal life, through beautiful religious service s at the church, and through alive and permanent preaching of the word of God.

4. His spiritual sons say that Father Nicodemus was full of love for God and for people and he was very zealous to officiate the holy religious services. He loved the Church and the apostolical right-faith to the self-sacrifice, and he knew well the Holy Scripture, the religious services, and the teachings of the Holy Fathers. For that he was permanently visited by believers and feared by the ill-believers. This was because anyone who listened to his words was enlightened to their soul and they were turning back, joyfully, to Christ.

5. His disciple also say that he was praying much in his monastic cell and he did nothing without prayer. He was reading the seven Praises daily, at their due time, and the Psalms, and other secret prayers. Then he was reading the chapters form the Bible, as also the life of the saint celebrated on that day. After finishing all of those, he talked to the people, he received confessions, and he wrote useful words.

6. For ten years Father Nicodemus was missionary priest in Transylvania. The fathers who knew him say about him that he proved to be a great defender of the Orthodoxy and of the Romanian unity. He was toiling the most for turning back the stray ones into the bosom of our Church. In a short time, he accomplished a full religious unity, by skillfully removing the confessional divisions, the immorality, and by strengthening the right-faith.

7. Because this pious father saw that one cannot defend the Orthodox faith and morals only by spoken word, with the blessing of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchy and of the Bishop of Cluj, he wrote and printed hundreds of brochures with a profound Orthodox moral content, adorned with pages on everybody's understanding, and which he spread gratuitously. His literary-spiritual works count 40 volumes and over 400 pages each volume, plus over ten thousand pages in manuscript.

By this, he proved to be a good pedagogue and a rarely found missionary priest in our monasticism.

8. They said about him that in the Leurda-Gîrbovului Village, he built a new church and he endowed it with all kinds of cultic objects donated by Transylvanian and Moldavian believers. After four years of priesthood in that village, he turned back to Moldavia again.

9. They also said about Father Nicodemus that in his parish the sectarians and the pub owners could not inhabit. The fanatic sectarians were leaving for other villages, because in his parish they couldn't make any proselyte, and the pub owners left because nobody bought their alcohol. They were the only people not loving this servant of Christ.

10. Once some people filed a complaint to the bishop claiming that Father Nicodemus would be heretic. So, the bishop called him and inquired him and told him:

- Go, Father Nicodemus, back to your parish and keep teaching the believers as you have been doing it until now, for not your holiness but their who complains about you are heretics.

11. At Agapia and Văratec Monasteries, Father Nicodemus continued the same activity as confessor and missionary priest. The was officiating the holy religious services with fear of God, he prayed and read much in his monastic cell, he was receiving confessions, he was teaching the people, and he was printing churchly books. After the year 1940 he reached to be the most skilled confessor for laypeople and for monks form that area.

12. Father Nicodemus reckoned the confession of sins as the first and the main means of knowledge, of spiritual education, and of correction of the Christian. From there started the spiritual ascension. And he was doing the confession like this:

Firstly, he asked the believer to read the churchly rule, to pray, to examine his conscience, and to write down on a piece of paper all his sins. Then he received their confession without hurry, since their childhood, patiently waiting for the believer to confess all their sins freely, In the end, he asked a few questions, and then he broke that piece of paper in the presence of the penitent, as a forgiveness sign, and he appointed a penance according to the power of the penitent, and he immediately read the absolution prayer. If somebody had on their conscience heavy sins, he granted to the penitent one or two hours more for they to examine their conscience, and then he absolved them of their sins.

13. This skilled confessor didn't ever give a harsh penance to the ones confessing their sins. He firstly asked the Christian to remove their sin, then to pray, and he asked them to daily read the seven Praises and the Holy Scripture and the teaching of faith, as also to read the Lives of the saints and other books useful to the soul. He stressed especially on the prayer and on the knowing of the right-faith.

- He who doesn't read, he said, he won't know. And he who doesn't know the Holy Scripture and the Orthodox faith, that one will easily fall in deadly sins and he will be caught in the snare of the sects.

14. Once he told to one of his disciples:

- Father, I don't give you much fasting and many prostrations. This is because also the bear and the snake fast. But the bear still remains a bear, and the snake still remains a snake. When they bite, they both kill! The man is likewise, he fasts much, but in his heart, he still is full of evilness, and when he eats and drinks, he falls into the sin of the gluttony. So, you fast according to your power, but you will read, firstly, the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers. Then you will learn on your own what you ought to do, how you smut pray and fast, what you must avoid, and how you could be saved.

15. To another disciple of his he told:

- Brother, I am not giving you any other penance but you to read the New Testament for five times. For four times in order that to be to you are four home walls, and for the fifth time in order that to be as a cover to the house of your soul.

16. An old lady who didn't know how to read, asked him:

- Father, how could I read the New Testament, for I am illiterate?

And he answered her:

- But when you receive a letter form your son, won't you go to your neighbor and ask her to read it for you? Do the same regarding the New Testament. Pray them who have love to read it for you, and both you and them will benefit of that.

17. They said about him that if somebody asked him about something, the old man didn't answer immediately and directly their question. But he sent them to the Holy Scripture, to the canons, and to eh Holy Fathers, so that they could read on their own, and to learn the desired answer.

18. They said about him that he never summoned anyone to confession, so that no one came to confess their sins forcedly. Neither he asked other people about his spiritual sons. But he allowed everyone to freely and consciously to work and to search for Christ.

19. He sometimes told to his spiritual sons:

- Brothers, in addition to reading the holy books, I am giving you this penance too, as you to urge one another to attend the church, to confession of sins, to giving alms, and to reading the Holy Scripture. This is because, if you do not help one another on the path to salvation, you will be held accountable in the front of Christ for them who will be lost. Can't you see how the sectarians strive to deceive the Orthodox?

20. His disciple say that Father Nicodemus didn't accept to confession of sins monks and laypeople who had other confessors, without the blessing of those confessors. Neither he allowed his spiritual sons to go to confess their sins to another confessor, without good reasons. But he advised the laypeople to go and confess their sins to their priests, and the monks to go and confess their sins to the confessors form their monasteries.

21. On occasions he taught the monks, telling them:

- When you go to see someone who is eager to learn but he lacks the means to, bring him some good for reading book. Bring him also a bread or something else to eat. Can't you see that the fish doesn't bite the empty hook? This is for we must use anything at our hand in order to gain souls for the Kingdom of God. Thus. Seeing the brother your love, he will joyfully accept the word of the life.

22. On some other occasions, while receiving the confessions of sins, he said:

- Brothers, I have reckoned to give you as penance the reading of the word of God. This is for if you have enlightened your mind with the word of God, then you will be capable of living a life full of good and useful deeds. If I give you to fast much and to do prostrations, I do not know your power. If I ask

you to give alms, I do not know your material condition. And if you do not firstly save your soul but you let is hungry, what use will the giving of alms be of?

That's why, in the first place, you ought to enlighten your mind with the prayer and with the word of God, and they you will fast and you will give alms.

23. This pious father was thoughtful and with right-reckoning in everything. When eating or fasting, when praying of reading, when being silent of when speaking, in his monastic cell or at the religious service, he did everything in silence, gently, and with much fear of God.

24. The monks who knew him say that he never reminded about things form the past. When he spoke, he uttered each word attentively, in order him not to mistake or to offend somebody. They never heard him to condemn, to quarrel, or to speak evil on somebody. Neither he allowed somebody else to gossip their neighbor near to his monastic cell.

- Do not forget, the old man told them, that for any vain-word we will be held accountable on the day of the judgment done by Christ (Mt. 12: 36). On some other occasions he reminded the Psalmist's word: "Put, Lord, guard to my mouth, and fencing door around my lips" (Ps. 140: 3). His word was wise, serene, seasoned with salt.

25. The fathers also say that he didn't accept to officiate religious services from those or to pray for those who didn't read the word of God, also, he didn't accept to confession of their sins them who didn't' attend the church or who refused to read the holy books.

26. Father Nicodemus cherished very much the time and he never wasted even one minute.

- The time, he said, it is as expensive as the soul is. If you have wasted your time, you will lose your soul! This is for myself, if I didn't manage well my time, and if I didn't live according to a program, I wouldn't do anything in my life.

27. The old man asked his disciples to do everything with prayer, with advice, and to fulfill their penance in advance for the time they would be absent from the monastery.

28. On occasions he taught the nuns:

- If you only cry and set up a new beginning, you won't benefit of it. That's why, let's be careful in order our death not to find us sleeping. Woe to us if our death finds us sleeping. This is because "in what he finds us, in that he will judge us" (Rom. 2: 6).

29. Father Nicodemus said:

- Four are the kinds of living in the world:

a) Devilish living, of those who rise themselves against God, against the Church, and against people. Namely of those who blaspheme against the Holy Ghost and who do evil to their benefactors.

b) The beastly living, of those who avenge of their fellow humans, and who pay evil for evil, and who do not forgive and who do not accept the injustice, as also of those who live in drunkenness and in debauchery.

c) Human living, of those who pay good for good and who love them who love them, and of those who fall and they rise again from sins.

d) Spiritual living, of those who strive to do good to their enemies. Namely of those who forgive, who give alms, who speak good on them who hate them, as also of those who always cogitated at the Lord's law.

30. He said again:

- The Christian has four kinds of parents:

a) Bodily parents, who gave us birth according to the natural laws;

b) Souly parents, our Baptism godfathers, at wedding, and at tonsuring in monasticism;

c) Spiritual parents, namely the priests and the confessors; and

d) Our heavenly Father Who has created us and Who takes care of us in everything.

We owe to honor and to obey our earthly parents, but we owe to ceaselessly extol and praise God.

31. Father Nicodemus also said:

- There are four kinds of impartation:

a) by committing all the good deeds, according to the Lord's word that says: "He who does My commandments, that one loved Me" (Jn. 14-21);

b) by attentively listening to the word of God, namely by reading the holy books, through religious services, and through spiritual songs, according to the word that says: "Not only with bread will the man live, but also with every word coming out of the God's mouth" (Mt. 4: 4);

c) by the holy prayer done with humbleness and attentively; and

d) by being Imparted with the Body and with the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; this is the highest impartation, without which nobody can be saved.

32. The nuns from Văratec and Agapia Monasteries said that Father Nicodemus was a man of prayer. He was praying in his monastic cell keeping his hands raised towards sky, he was praying while in the church, he was praying while traveling somewhere, he was praying in the forest, and he was permanently extolling God. After he had finished his prayer, he opened the door of his monastic cell and he spoke to the people, receiving their confessions and comforting all of them.

33. Once, a troubled man came to see Father Nicodemus and told him:

- Father, many troubles have come upon me, and I can no longer endure them. Give me a useful word.

- Do not be troubled, brother, the old man told him. Do you see these troubles? Lo, Christ too were there. John the Baptist were there, the Holy Apostles, the Holy Martyrs, and all the fathers. There we ought to be too, us who follow Christ. This is because there is not other path to salvation. We cannot achieve the joy of the salvation until tasting, in the first place, the cup of the suffering and of the life's troubles.

34. One day a woman come to confess him her sins, and he told her:

- Read attentively this book, write down your sins, and then kneel in front of the holy icons and repeat that for seven times, with repentance and

with tears. Only after that, come and confess your sins. This is for, as Naaman the Syrian dipped himself for seven time in Jordan River's water (4 Kings 5: 10) and he was cleaned of his leprosy, we too ought to repent with the whole our heart so that God will wash away the leprosy of our sins.

35. This renown confessor was very zealous for saving the people who came to see him. He received all of them with love, he received their confession attentively, and he advised them wisely. This was for he was steadfast and assertive in word and he never changed his mind. He did everything for saving the man's soul.

36. And regarding the holy prayer he taught:

- Brothers, let's ceaselessly and attentively pray. Let's not allow our mind to wonder during the prayer. This is because what you are thinking at, that you will worship, and your prayer will become a sin, because of you worshipping the diols from your mind and not Christ. So, let's ask God for help in order us to be able to pray as we ought to. And if our thoughts run away, let's turn them back as the shepherd turns his sheep which run away from the enclosure.

37. Once hid disciples told him:

- Father, give us a useful word.

And the old man told them:

- Brothers, have faith in God for what the people cannot do God does in an instant. Do not fear anything except God. That's why, keep his commandments as the apple of your eye, for His is the glory forever and ever. Amen!

38. Father Nicodemus had a great awe towards the Mother of the Lord, Whom he dedicated many prayers and beautiful pages. And he defended with much power the honoring of the Mother of the Lord, against sectarians, by confessing Her as true Birth Giver of God and mediator for our salvation. He didn't allow anyone to place adornments or precious objects at the icon of the Mother od the Lord.

39. This tireless confessor took a great care for the salvation of everybody. He advised the monks to obey without resisting and to ceaselessly pray. He advised the laypeople to work with dignity for their daily bread and to always attend the church. He advised the married people to give birth to children and to raise them in the fear of God, and he strongly combated the divorce and the abortion. And he urged the young people to obey their parents, to get educated, to avoid getting drunk or debauched, and to be useful to the society which they were living in.

He encouraged everybody as a parent, he taught them as a confessor, and he comforted them with a mother's love. Even the ill ones got healed by his prayers, for he was strengthened by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

40. A monk who loved the quietude asked him once:

- Father Nicodemus what is most useful for the monks, those days? To stay in quietude and to pray or to save others to be saved?

- To do both of those: in the first place the prayer and the life as saint as possible, and then the mission that is spiritual love and giving of alms. When you see the neighbor's house in fire can you stay in quietude and pray, until you won't throw a bucket of water on the fire? The todays' world is lit up by the fire of the hatred, of the fornication, and of the sin. Let us the monks help too, according to our power, to the people's salvation.

41. Father Nicodemus saw telling to his disciples:

- When I was ordained priest, I secretly prayed to God and I asked Him for giving me the gift of the word, of the spiritual wisdom, and of guiding the soul on the path to salvation, in order I to be able to guide as many Christians as possible to the Kingdom of Heavens. I though back then not to accept money for the religious services. But, because I saw that by doing so, I brought offense and upset the believers because of refusing their gift, I decided, in front of God, to accept what the believers bring to the church; but I give a share of money to the poor, and I use the other share for printing and for buying holy books which I can distribute freely to them who need these books. I have been doing so for my entire priest life, and many souls have benefited of it and they turned to Christ with the help of the prayers, of the good advice, and of the holy books.

42. To one of his disciples, who was quarrelling with the people from around, he told him:

- It is neither good nor Christian to waste your time in discussions which lead to strife and to division. That one is victorious in discussion who seems defeated at the beginning, but in the end, he succeeds in remaining in peace and in love with that whom he doesn't match his idea with.

43. On occasions the old man told to his disciples:

- Our Christian people is very loving of God, of truth, of justice, but each one only aimed to exploit the people. Rarely there was somebody to help the people, to guide the people, and to truly urge the people to the good things, to salvation. My heart aches me because I am not able to do more for this people, for I too am bone out of their bones, flesh out of their flesh. If I could, I would go from house to house in order to talk to our believers, to teach them the right-faith, to give them some book for reading, to make prayers together with them, to comfort them in their troubles, and to rejoice myself together with them, so that they won't feel alone and forsaken.

44. Father Nicodemus reckoned as very important the spreading of the good Orthodox books among believers. On occasions he told to his spiritual sons:

- A good book, a Christian one, it is an angel of God, for it teaches you how to know Him and how to love Him, how to discover the beauty of the life into Christ, how to love the people, how to shun yourself from sin, and how you to take care of the salvation of your soul. If during your life you gather holy books instead of money, and after your death your descendants sold those books, you wouldn't lose their benefit and they would be reckoned to you are souly alms, for regardless where those holy books will end to, they will spread light and they will bring souls to the knowledge of God. And if there remained

money or wealth after you and your descendants spend those in committing sins, not only that you wouldn't benefit anything, but you would be found guilty because through your avarice and greediness, you gave to your descendants the occasions to commit sins. If you throw a big banquet so that to feed the entire village, if you dress up the poor with new clothes, and even if you built churches from the ground up, the enemy won't be so upset as when you give somebody a good for reading book, a Christian book in which he could see, as in a mirror, his soul state of moral decay and of sinfulness.

45. A believer asked Father Nicodemus:

- Pious Father, I am living in a house inherited form an aunt of mine. I wonder what could I do best for her soul's resting?

- In order you to have more confidence in her salvation, the old man answered him, and in order you to gain an inward peace too, it will be good that you use a share of what you earn, according to your power, for buying churchly books and you to give those books to the eager ones as alms, so that they could be able to read and to know the will of God. This is for, in addition to the holy religious services for the deceased ones, the Christian earn a great souly benefit by bestowing good books to them who desire the salvation of their souls.

46. And for the Holy Confession he told to his disciples:

- Take care of those whom you bring to confess their sins. Do not make people to waste their time if they aren't determined to leave their sins. Do not blindfold the people, but tell them clearly what they should do for the salvation of their sins. If they are unable to leave their drunkenness, their debauchery, their judgments, their strife, their laziness, and their whole evilness, let such people do the will of their hearts. And if the fear of God and the though of death has sprouted out within their hearts, if they are determined to leave their sins which enslave them, and to fight the good Christian battle, to pray, to fast, to regularly attend the church, to give alms, to reconcile with their fellow humans, to stop cursing the holy things, and to obey the servants of the Church, then give them to read useful to the soul books, and help them prepare themselves for the Holy Confession. After they have prepared themselves as well as possible, they must write down their sins since their childhood, so that they could read those, with repentance, before the holy icons and with the oil-lamp lit up and with q day of fasting, and they to decide to leave their sins, to take penance, and to lay down a good beginning. Only thus must our believers come to the Mystery of the Confession. And if they come in a hurry, without making a decision to leave their sins, and if they take no penance, their sins will remain within their hearts and they will be imparted with the Holy Mysteries of Christ towards their damnation.

47. Once, Father Nicodemus told to a group of believers:

- My dears, even if you were unbaptized, when it comes about you to suffer for the right-faith or for the holy books, that suffering has the power for cleaning up the sins of one who suffers without complaining. To one who suffers for the right-faith and for the holy books, he is counted together with

the martyrs of the Church of Christ. The enemy doesn't get more upset than for a good book, a useful to the soul book, given to the believers. Through the books we read all the plans of the enemy devil are thwarted. If you throw a party for the poor, the enemy won't get upset so much. If you become founder of churches, he will overlook you. If you fast and pray, he will get upset thousands time more, but not as much as when you give somebody a good book, a building-of-soul book to read. Through such Orthodox books many souls are waken up from the slavery of the passions dominating them, as form a drunkenness.

My brothers, let's love the holy book, starting with the Holy Scripture, the Lives of the saints, and the prayer books, and let's bestowed those books with an open heart to be to others too towards benefit and salvation. The money spent on a holy book is a pleasant-to God sacrifice. We will leave this existence, sooner of later, but if we succeed to leave to our descendants as many holy books as possible, we will leave them a dowry of a great value for them and for those who will come after them.

48. One of his spiritual sons asked Father Nicodemus:

- That Christian who is zealous to do good deeds and who reads the holy books, but he doesn't regularly confess his sins and he doesn't follow the advice of his confessor, can he be saved?

- If one had, the old man answered, many holy books and he will strive himself for fulfilling the commandments of God, without confession and without obeying a skilled confessor, he couldn't save himself. He is like a man who entered a pharmacy to buy some medicines but the pharmacist is missing. Without him who is able to give him the necessary medicines, the sick man won't be able to heal himself. The confessor is, for his spiritual sons, a doctor, a teacher, and a souly father, a role model of living into Christ, a man of prayer, an adviser, a guarantor in front of the Holy Trinity, a mediator in front of the Son, and a spring through which the grace of the Holy Ghost is overpoured upon his disciples. Through his hands are removed the sins, through his words they learn the holy things, and through his prayer is descended upon them the grace of the salvation. Great role has the good confessor in the life of the Christian.

After 55 years of chosen serving into the Church of Christ, knowing his death in advance, Father Nicodemus yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord, on Sunday, 6th of July, in the salvation year 1975. The community of the Agapia and Văratec Monasteries placed his body, until the new coming, next to the altar of the church which he served with co much dignity for over a half od a century.

MONK BENJAMIN IORGA
Sihăstria Monastery
(1891-1976)

a. His Life

This ascetic monk and worker of the Prayer to Jesus, originated form Bîrlad area. In the year 1924 he became a monk at Moşunoaiele Hermitage - Vrancea County. After a few years, he entered under the guidance of a great monk called Evghenie Dumitrescu from Ţifeşti-Vrancea subordinated unit. Between the years 1957-1966 he lived in ascesis at Bucium Hermitage - Iaşi County, and during his last ten years he lived in the community of Sihăstria Monastery, where he passed away too.

b. Deeds and Teaching Words

1. Father Benjamin said that after the correction of the calendar his soul rebelled and, transgressing the commandment of the obedience, he became a hermit on Vrancea Mountains. He toiled there alone, for three years, but he didn't have souly peace because he parted with the Church. Then he came to Father Evghenie as asked him:

- Why should I do, father, for I am troubled?

- If you want to be saved, the old man answered him, enter again under the obedience of the Church and of an abbot. Other3wise, you will lose your soul for you are deceived by the enemy.

- Do you want to accept me in the community of your holiness?

- Come, father, hop on the carriage of the obedience. But take heed that here you will have more temptations than you have had while living into wilderness. Because you come from the will of your holiness under the will of somebody else. But if you will obey in silence and in prayer, you will find much peace to your soul.

2. Father Benjamin fulfilled with holiness the commandment of the obedience and by toiling himself much with the fasting, with the prayer, and with the guarding of his mind, he reached to be an advanced monk and full of fear of God. This was for he was praying ceaselessly and he was doing everything with blessing.

3. Once he told to one of the fathers:

- If God judged us according to our thoughts, I think that nobody would be saved. This is because the war of the thoughts does not cease until our death.

4. On some other occasion another father asked him:

- If we do not commit the sin with our deed, will we be granted mercy on the hour of our judgment?

And the old man answered him:

- The mind is everything, father. Here is waged the war. On the war of our mind depends our salvation of our damnation. This is because the devils

do not give us any recess. If they do not succeed to defeat us with the deed, then they fight us through thoughts and imaginings. Big is the war of the mind! Especially on monks. That's why we must pray ceaselessly. Oh, may God escape us from the eternal damnation! And he immediately started crying.

5. On another occasion, he also said:

- The devil is now allowed to fight the people and to choose the saints. This is because if he didn't fight us, we wouldn't be crowned. He always fights me too. He wants to drag me on his side. But I, when I see myself getting weak, I start shouting out from the bottom of my heart: "Sweet Jesus, do not let me! Mother of the Lord Who gave birth to Sun Christ, do not let me!". And the old man started crying again.

6. Once he told to one of the fathers:

- Great thing is the monasticism! Let's extoll the Emperor and the Empress for they have made us sons of the light and of the eternity! For this is our purpose: to achieve the Lord. This is everything we want on earth. Hey, fathers, great is the eternal happiness!

7. Father Benjamin also said:

- For fifty years I've been fighting my thoughts and I have been defeated by them! This is why I am asking myself whether will I see the face of Christ? Will I achieve good angels on the hour of my death? Will I gain then the sweet Jesus? This is because I must answer for any thought and word of mine.

8. Once a brother asked him:

- Father Benjamin, how do you feel yourself in your monastic cell?

And the old man answered him:

- What is the use of having quietude in my monastic cell while I have disturbance in my head? This is because the war of the thoughts does not leave us until we will be moved from this tent.

9. On some other occasion the old man said:

- It is more precious the shack of Saint John than my monastic cell. This is because I am deceived by thoughts, by food, and by sleep. That's why the Holy Fathers say that "the much-sleeping if the icon of the death". We need much humbleness, father. If the one from inside is not monk, everything will be vain!

10. One day a brother asked him:

- Father Benjamin, do you still have relatives at home?

- Since I've come to serve to Christ, the old man answered, I haven't gone back to my village, neither have I written to anyone, but I've left everything to His great mercy. And the brother benefited of his ascesis.

11. The brothers told him also:

- Father Benjamin, give us a useful word.

- Hey, fathers, he answered them, the monasticism is a great gift! Let's extoll Emperor Christ and the Mother of the Light, because we have no other hope. Let's keep our mind clean and may God deliver us from fornication. This is because this is the biggest war of the monk. And for thoughts let's always repent ourselves with tears.

12. In the year 1966 he had wanted to withdrew himself to quietude, but the abbot didn't give him his blessing.

- Father Benjamin, the abbot told him, stay at Bucium, for lo, we have built new monastic cells for the monks.

- Father Abbot, these are for the future generations. As about me, allow me to go to Sihăstria Monastery, for I want to die there!

13. Once the abbot asked him for a useful word, and the old man told him:

- Lead the monastery as God will enlighten you, but have much love and patience.

14. On occasions he told to his disciple, with tears:

- The salvation, brother, we have to gain it! Is this unimportant?

15. The same disciple asked him, on one occasion, for a useful word. And the old man told him:

- Brother, search for one who is more taught to give you a useful word. And if you want to admit, you guard these three things: Do not make friends with women, to not drink wine, and have deep humbleness.

16. On the celebration day of Saint George, the Abbot served bread and wine to the fathers. And Father Benjamin saw that and sighing he said:

- Today the holy martyr had been sacrificed for Christ, but we celebrate him with bread and with cakes!

17. A confessor asked the old man:

- How many times you receive the Holy Impartation, Father Benjamin?

- Usually, once a month. For three weeks I eat once a day, and I attend all the religious services, I read the *Book of Psalms* and I utter the Prayer to Jesus. On the fourth week I do not eat anything on Wednesday and on Friday. And on Saturday I receive, with great joy, Christ the priceless Jewel. And the eyes of the old man immediately got full with tears.

18. On day, a father gave him to drink from a cup some wort mixed with honey. And the old man, after tasting only a little, he thanked and said:

- I don't want to drink more because my mind gets tired and then the evil thoughts start.

19. The fathers said about him that on occasions, monks and laypeople came to ask him for blessings. And the old man, full of joy and with tears in his eyes, answered them:

- These are the last days: May the good God have mercy on us and to throw all of us into the Paradise of the delectation and in the eternal good things with the whole nation belonging to us!

20. One day, Father Benjamin was praying outside, lying down on a pillow, for he was sick. Then, crying, he raised his hands towards the sky and said:

Lord. I have spent almost 60 years in monasticism and I haven't yet laid down a good beginning. This is because the enemy defeats me with the thought of the vain-glory.

21. On another day his disciple asked him:

- Father Benjamin, are you sick, because I haven't seen you attending the church today?

- I am always in the church! the old man answered him.

22. On some other occasion the fathers asked him:

- How are you feeling, Father Benjamin?

And he answered them:

- Dead soul in a living body! This body doesn't want to allow itself to the crossed and led by mind. And if you give to is much meat and wine, it will totally murder you.

23. One day his disciple asked him:

- Father Benjamin, for how many years you haven't been drinking wine?

- For thirty and four years.

- For you have receive the holy Impartation today, drink this cup of wine.

But the old man answered him:

- I take it in order to obey you. But if you force me to take one more, I will disobey you.

24. Father Benjamin has great piousness towards the Mother of the Lord, Whom he was praising day and night. On occasions he told to the fathers:

- Oh, kindness of the Emperor, for He has given us His Mother to be our Mother! Empress, Master, Lady, all-cherished and all-sweet Mother. Oh, kindness of Emperor Christ!

25. A father asked him for a useful word. And the old man said:

- Give thanks to the Mother of the Lord Who has unspeakable mercy on us. For She has got us out of the world and She brought us to the holy monastery!

26. The same father asked him:

- What does the Christian need the most for getting saved?

And the old man answered him:

- If we do not have humbleness, we cannot be saved!

27. One day one of the fathers asked him:

- Do you know me, Father Benjamin?

- May God know you! the old man answered him.

- Pray for me, Father Benjamin!

- Go and ask somebody else who is worthier than me! the old man told him with a humble voice.

28. Two days before his death a doctor came to see Father Benjamin, and told him:

- I am a doctor. Can I help you:

And the old man answered him:

- Yes, you are a doctor, But I am going to go to the Doctor from above Who heals both the body and the soul.

29. Being close to his death, he told to everybody:

- "The pains of the death have surrounded me" (Ps. 17: 5). And then he added: Tomorrow I am going! Tomorrow I am going!

After one more day, he yielded his soul, peacefully, in the hand of the lord, having on his lips the Prayer to Jesus.

PROTOSYNCELLUS JOACHIM SPĂTARU
Neamţ Monastery
(1896-1976)

Father Joachim was a famous confessor in the community of Neamţ Monastery, during the last decades of our time. He originated from Belceşti Commune – Iaşi County. In the year 1921 he entered the monastic life, and he learnt the good ascesis and the obedience form the most chosen confessors from the great monastery.

Later on, being him found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, he reached to be abbot to Pocrov Hermitage and a renowned confessor for monks and for laypeople. This was for there were visiting the hermitage numerous villagers and poor people form Pipirig, some asking for religious services and some others asking for alms. And Father Joachim stood, with a serene face and with an open heart in front of everybody, comforting, receiving confessions, and feeding each one of them. He was a confessor of the gentleness. Through that he was gaining many souls for the Kingdom of God. After he descended from Pocrov to the monastery, he continued having the same task as priest and confessor. His monastic cell from the monastery was a real chapel and guesthouse for the believers. This is for he was known to and searched by many people from fountains and from plains, from Bucovina and from the Lower County. Everybody knew the kindness of the old man, they benefited of his words, and they trustfully knocked on the door of his monastic cell.

Father Joachim officiated, for fifty years, the Holy Liturgy at the altar of the church from Neamţ Monastery, officiating the holy religious services with much zeal and love. And for equally numerous years he removed from the people's souls the tie of the sins, advising and raising many spiritual sons.

On Wednesday, during the Good Week, the salvation year 1976, while he was going to the church, Father Joachim felt himself called to Christ. So, marking himself with the Holy Cross, on that moment he yielded his soul in the hands of the Lord.

So passed away a great confessor from Neamţ Monastery.

ARCHIMANDRITE CHRYSOSTOM POSTOLACHE
Bucium Hermitage – Iaşi County
(1884-1979)

Pious Archimandrite Chrysostom Postolache originated form Probota Commune – Iaşi County. Advised by the gift of the Holy Ghost, in the year 1908 he reached to be inhabitant of the Prodromul Hermitage from Mount Athos, where he received the tonsuring into monasticism from Archimandrite Antipas Dinescu, the abbot of the hermitage. Then, advancing in working the good deeds, he was found worthy of the gift of the priesthood, officiating the holy religious services in the Romanian community from the Garden of the Mother of the lord, and praying day and night for the whole world. He also loved very much the quietude, surpassing many with his gentleness and with his obedience and often visiting the hermits from under the peak of Athos.

Between the years 1919-1921, Archimandrite Chrysostom was abbot of the Romanian Hermitage Prodromul, gathering around himself a community of 80 monks from all the corners of the country. And he was among them as a lit-up candle and as a mother with many sons, comforting each of them and guiding them towards Christ.

In the year 1921 he came back to the country, as serving priest at Darvari Hermitage from Bucharest, and in the year 1937 he was appointed abbot to Bucium Hermitage from near Iaşi, a task fulfilled by him with much dignity and spiritual settlement, for 42 years. He was an advanced monk, a tireless servant of the Holy Church for 60 years, a confessor having many spiritual sons, having an enlightened face, a gentle soul, and being him s a venerable abbot renowned all-over the country: these were a few spiritual traits of Archimandrite Chrysostom Postolache.

As abbot of Bicium Hermitage he gathered around himself up to 20 disciples, accustoming them especially to humbleness and to obedience, and officiating daily the godlike Liturgy. Due to this pious abbot, at Bucium Hermitage was preserved undiminished the typicon of the religious serviced from Mount Athos.

In the autumn of the year 1979, feeling himself called by Christ to the heavenly dwelling places, his disciples gathered din his monastic cell and they asked him:

- Father Abbot, give us your last blessing and tell us a useful word! - Fathers, the old man answered them, strive yourself for the whole your life to serve the Church, for the Church needs you. Be obedient, regardless what commandment you will receive. This is for the obedience is life, while the disobedience works death. Especially when there is a commandment. This is because you have heard what Prophet Davis said: “And they who work rebellion, the Lord will take them together with the lawless ones” (Ps. 124: 5). Then he kissed everybody goodbye, and he yielded his soul in the hands of God, being 95 years old.

So passe away Pious Archimandrite Chrysostom, the venerable abbot of our monasteries!

Afterword to the English Translation

Dear Reader,

It has been such an arduous task for us to translate this great work initially put together by Archimandrite Ioanichie Bălan! And, after finishing it, we are keenly aware of translation's shortcomings, and that's why are urge any reader who notices better variants of translation solutions or better solutions for fluency in the English language, please to communicated those to us at goleam@yahoo.com or mobile phone: 0040748112001 (Marius Golea). We will gladly use any help in this regard.

Also, we propose to anyone who knows about any other nuns or monks worthy of being inserted in this book, to send us the necessary sources of information. Father Ioanichie ended his work on this anthology in 70 years ago, and since then many worthy nuns and monks have been living in the Romanian monasteries, at Mount Athos, or in the Holy Land.

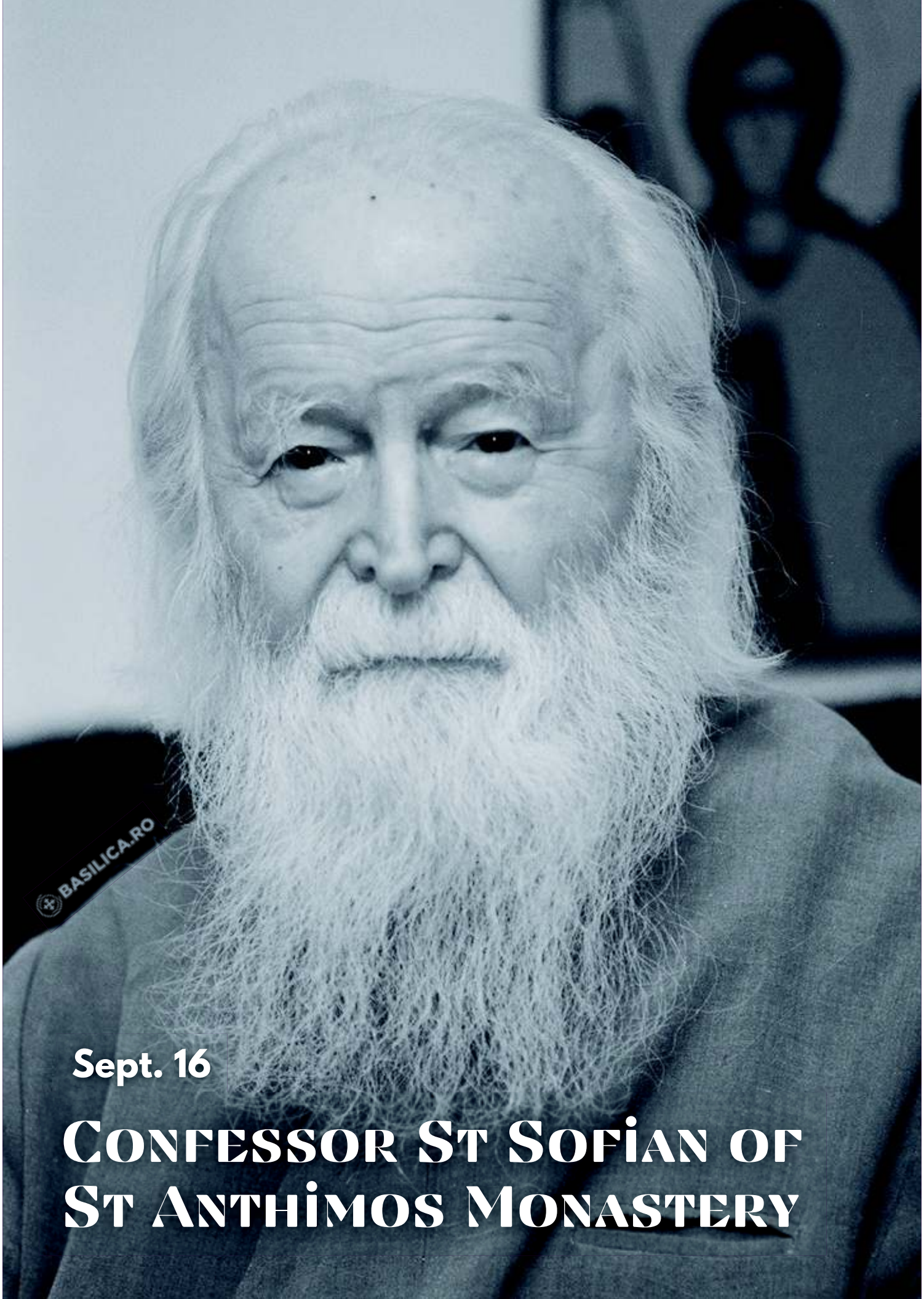
Another aspect is that the Orthodox Romanian Church officially declared, in the year 2024, as saint fathers as: Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, Arhim. Cleopa Ilie, Arhim. Paisie Olaru, Duhovnicul Arsenie Boca, Arhim. Sofian Boghiu, Pr. Ilie Lăcătuşu, Pr. Constantin Sârbu, Pr. Gherontie Puiu, Arhim. Dometie Manolache, Arhim. Serafim Popescu, Liviu Galaction Munteanu, and others (14 in total, see https://tinyurl.com/asrhbhvk), who, of course, deserved a place in *The Romanian Paterikon*. If somebody would produce in Romanian or in English the needed presentation of these new saints, we would gladly insert it in the present translation.

We thank God for helping us to bring to a good end this exceeding our capabilities endeavor!

BASILICA.RO

ROMANIAN VENERABLES & CONFESSORS

canonised in 2024



Sept. 16

Confessor St Sofian of St Anthimos Monastery

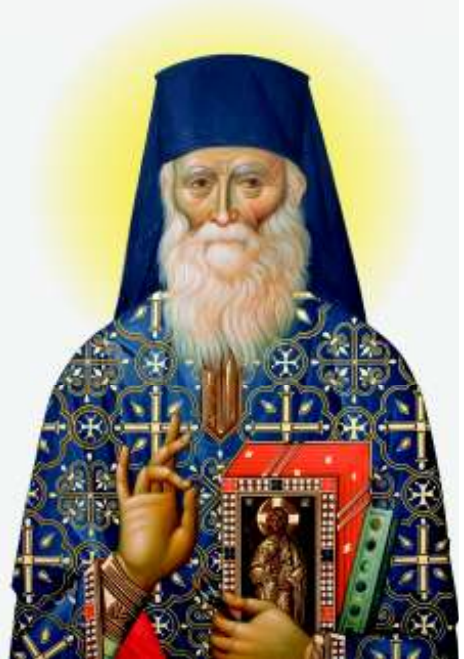
ST SOFIAN THE CONFESSOR OF ANTIM MONASTERY

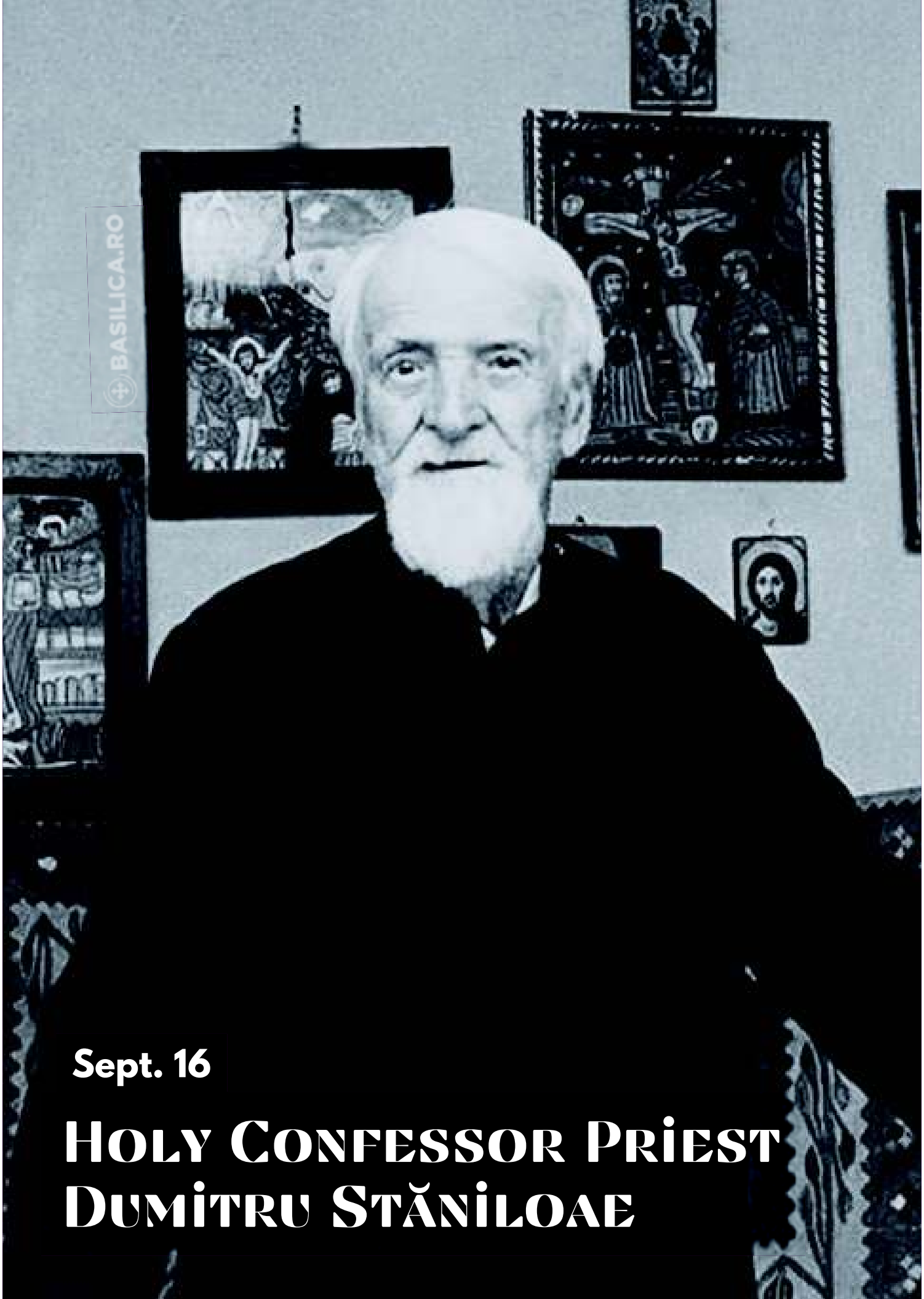
BASILICA.RO

He is the first Orthodox saint to be canonised who lived into the 21st century. He was born on October 7, 1912, in Cuconeștii Vechi, Bălți County, and entered monastic life at a young age. Educated in both theology and the fine arts, he was not only a theologian and servant of the Church, but also an accomplished iconographer and church painter. He was a leading member of the Burning Bush spiritual movement, for which he was imprisoned and released in 1964. As abbot of Antim and Plumbuita Monasteries, and a gentle, beloved spiritual father, he became known as the "Spiritual Father of Bucharest," guiding hundreds of disciples. He reposed in the Lord on September 14, 2002, and was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 3:

O Saint Sofian, labourer in prayer, wise Father, and skilful iconographer of the Church, you who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, painted the image of Christ in human souls and suffered imprisonment for the faith, now dwelling in heaven with all the saints, pray unceasingly to God for us.





Sept. 16

Holy Confessor Priest Dumitru Stăniloae

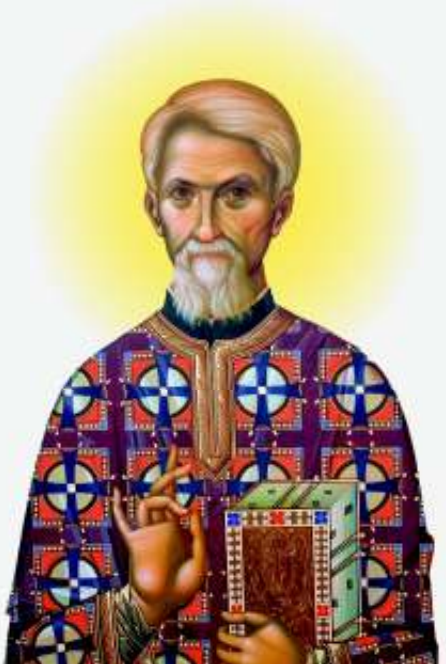
HOLY CONFESSOR PRIEST DUMITRU STĂNILOAE

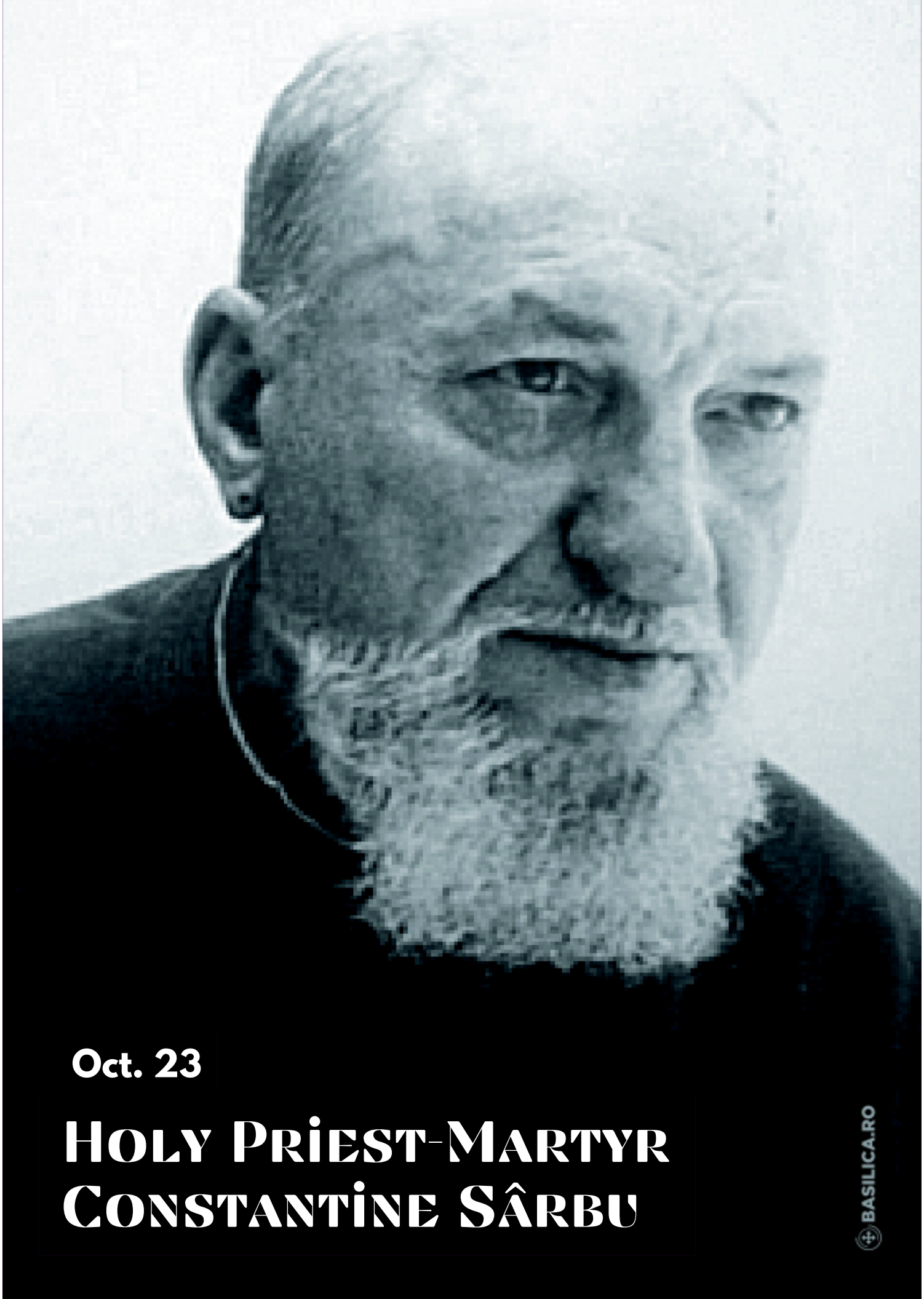
BASILICA.RO

Born in 1903, he was one of the greatest Orthodox theologians of the 20th century, a priest, professor, and prolific author whose writings shaped generations of Orthodox Christians. Best known for translating the Philokalia into Romanian and making the wisdom of the Holy Fathers accessible to countless readers, he also played a significant role in the Burning Bush spiritual movement. Imprisoned for five years under the communist regime because of his faith, he regarded prison as a "school of prayer." Throughout his life, he tirelessly taught that true theology is inseparable from prayer, ascetic life, and personal communion with God. He reposed in the Lord in 1993 and was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 5:

With a triple crown adorning you: of the priesthood, Father, of good confession, and of theology, you shine like the sun, teaching us to honour the consubstantial Trinity, before Whom, Saint Dumitru, always remember us.





Oct. 23

Holy Priest-Martyr Constantine Sârbu

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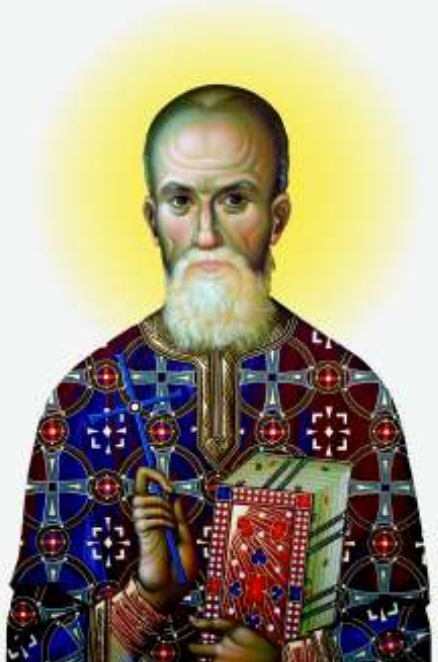
HOLY PRIEST-MARTYR CONSTANTINE SÂRBU

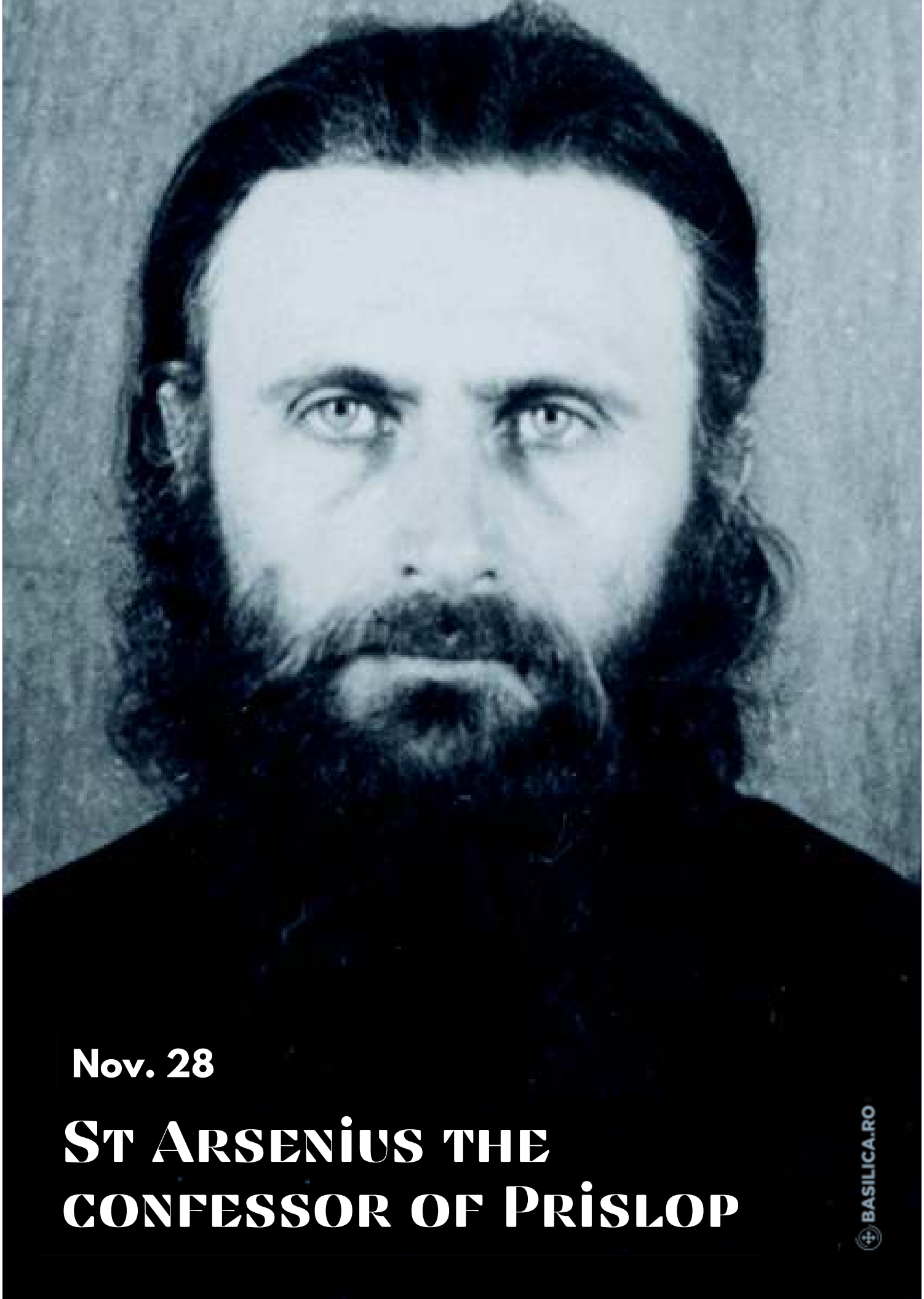
BASILICA.RO

He was born in 1905 into extreme poverty and, despite countless childhood hardships, devoted his life to Christ and the service of His Church. A gifted priest, teacher, and tireless pastor, he built churches, cared for the poor, and inspired vibrant parish communities through his faith and compassion. Arrested by the communist regime in 1954, he endured years of imprisonment, forced labour, and brutal torture, steadfastly refusing to renounce Christ. After his release, he rebuilt the ruined Sapienței Church in Bucharest, where his ministry continued to attract thousands of faithful despite constant surveillance. He reposed in the Lord in 1975 and was canonised in 2024; his holy relics were uncovered in 2023.

Troparion, tone 5:

From infancy, O Father, living in poverty, you purified yourself for the service ordained from above so that you could also bear the burden of your neighbour. Thus, O hieromartyr of Christ, Constantine, you were shown as a comfort to everyone by Him Who saved the world through His crucifixion.





Nov. 28

St Arsenius the confessor of Prislop

BASILICA.RO

ST ARSENIUS THE CONFESSOR OF PRISLOP

BASILICA.RO

Saint Arsenius Boca (1910 to 1989) was a monk, priest, iconographer, and one of Romania's most beloved spiritual fathers. Gifted in both theology and sacred art, he helped revive Orthodox spiritual life through his preaching, ascetic example, and his contribution to publishing the Philokalia alongside St Dumitru Stăniloae. As abbot of Prislop Monastery, he became a source of repentance and guidance for thousands of faithful, drawing the attention of the communist authorities, who repeatedly arrested him and eventually expelled him from monastic life. Though forbidden to serve as a priest, he remained steadfast in prayer, continuing his ministry through spiritual writings and church painting until his repose in the Lord in 1989.

Troparion, tone 8:

O Venerable Father Arsenius, confessor of the true faith, wise guide of the faithful on the path to the Kingdom, and wonderworker who shone brightly in times of trial, pray to Christ our God to save our souls.

July 22

Holy Confessor Priest Elijah Lăcătușu

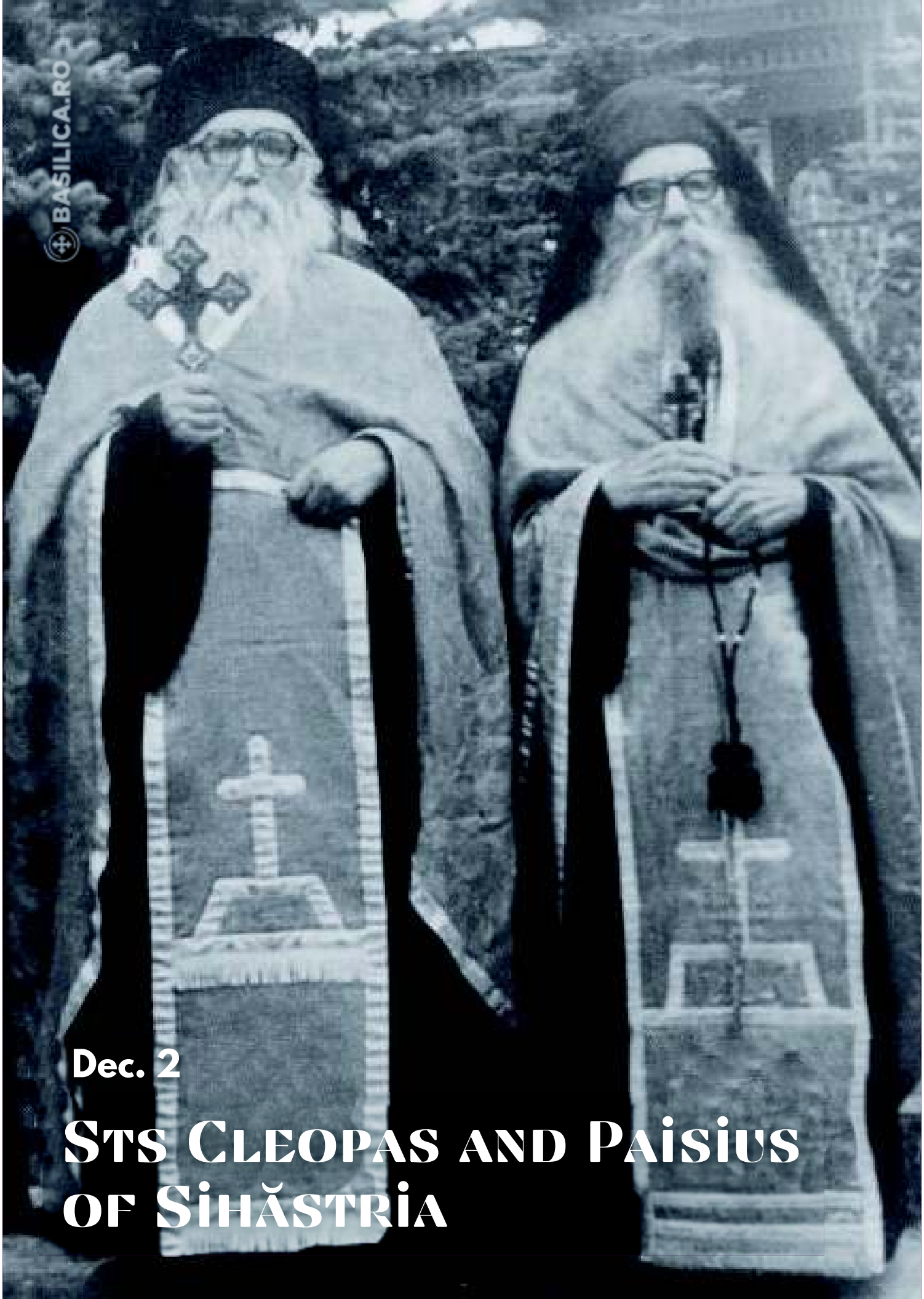
HOLY CONFESSOR PRIEST ELIJAH LĂCĂTUȘU

BASILICA.RO

Born in 1909, he was a devoted parish priest, confessor of the faith, and compassionate spiritual father who endured years of imprisonment and forced labour under the communist regime for his unwavering witness to Christ. Renowned for his humility, silence, and selfless love, he comforted fellow prisoners, shared everything he possessed with those in need, and inspired many through his life of constant prayer and sacrifice. After his repose in the Lord in 1983, his body was found incorrupt and fragrant, becoming a source of miracles and healing for countless faithful. He was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 8:

From your youth, through your love for all people, you revealed the love of your heart for Christ God, O grace-filled Elijah. Then, by confessing Him and enduring persecution with patience, you were honoured, O Father, with the gift of incorruption. Now, pray for us with boldness before the throne of God.



Dec. 2

Sts Cleopas and Paisius of Sihăstria

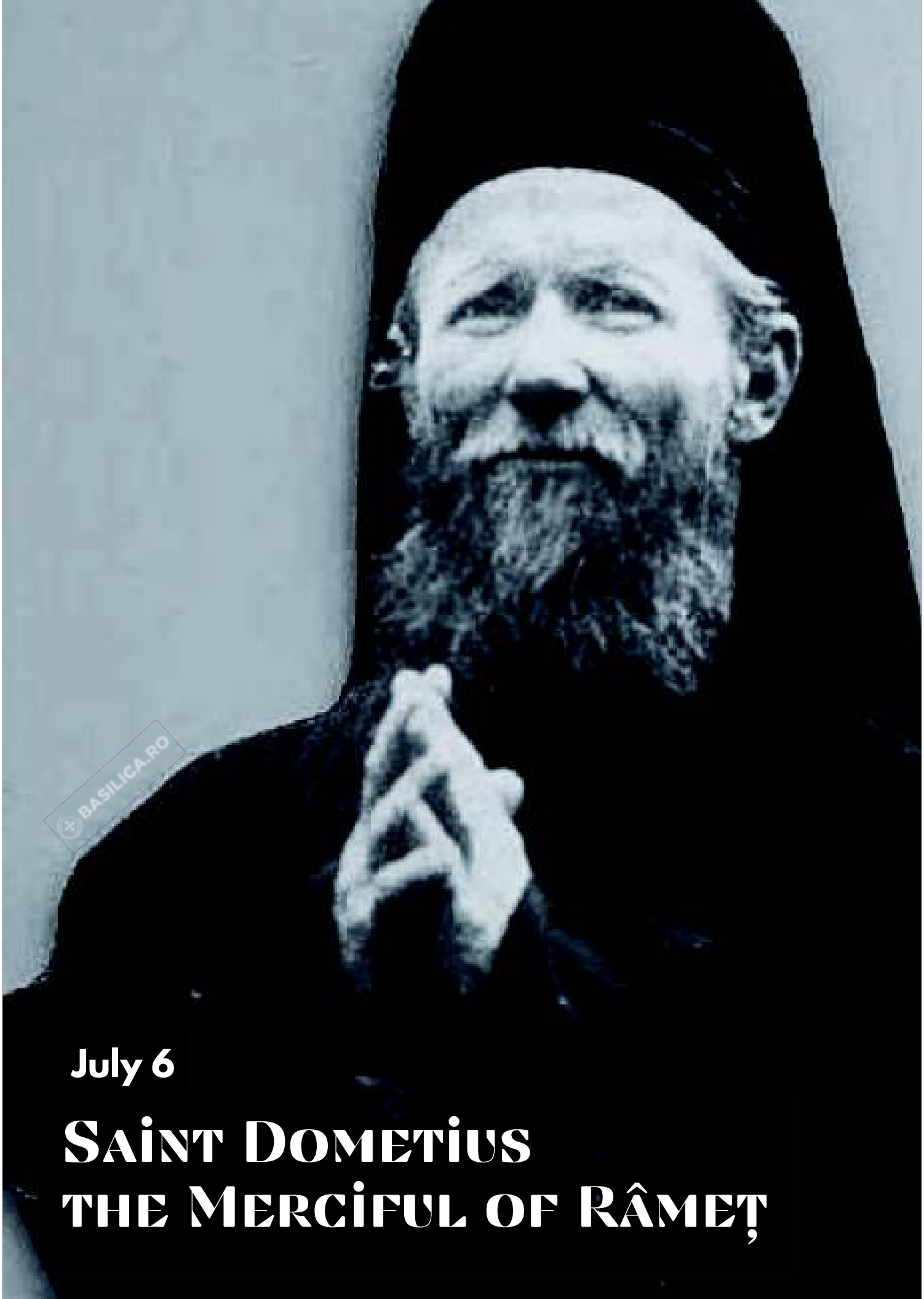
STS CLEOPAS AND PAISIUS OF SIHĂSTRIA

BASILICA.RO

The Venerable Elders Paisius Olaru (1897 to 1990) and Cleopas Ilie (1912 to 1998) were two of the most influential Romanian spiritual fathers of the 20th century, whose lives and ministries were closely linked to Sihăstria Monastery. Elder Paisius, renowned for his humility, unceasing prayer, spiritual discernment, and compassionate guidance, spent decades hearing confessions and leading countless souls to Christ. His disciple, Elder Cleopas, became one of Romania's greatest Orthodox preachers, confessors, and defenders of the faith, reviving monastic life through his sermons, writings, and tireless pastoral ministry. Both endured the hardships of the communist era. They were canonised together in 2024.

Troparion, tone 1:

Let us honour from our hearts the grace-filled spiritual fathers of Moldavia, who strove with one mind in faith upon the earth: the great and enlightened Cleopas, the preacher of Christ, and Paisius, the humble and long-suffering, crying aloud: Glory to Him who has glorified you! Glory to Him who has enlightened you! Glory to Him who has revealed you as unceasing intercessors for us!



July 6

Saint Dometius the Merciful of Râmeț

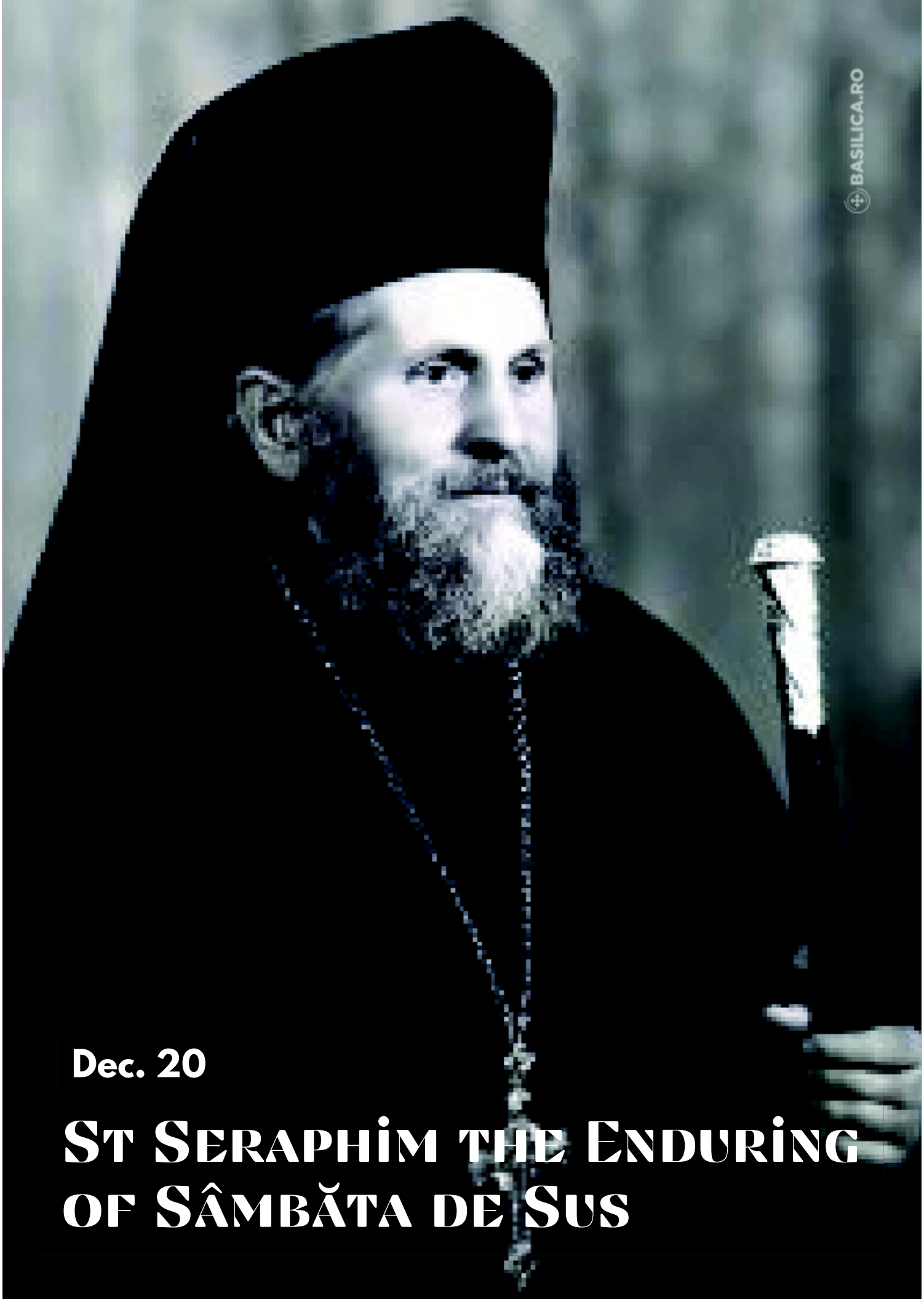
SAINT DOMETIUS THE MERCIFUL OF RÂMEȚ

BASILICA.RO

Born in 1924, he was a Romanian monk, priest, theologian, and abbot who dedicated his life to serving the Church and the needy. A disciple of St Arsenius of Prislop and a student of St Dumitru Stăniloae, he led several monasteries, taught at monastic schools, and became especially known for reviving Râmeț Monastery, where he was a beloved spiritual father renowned for his humility, charity, and gift of reconciliation. He lived in great simplicity, giving away his possessions to the poor, and reposed in the Lord in 1975 after collapsing from exhaustion while carrying the heaviest load of food supplies for his monastery. He was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 1:

We know and honour you as a guide of monks, nuns and lay faithful, a helper of the poor in all their needs and a model of mercy. O Venerable Father Dometius, pray for our souls.



Dec. 20

St Seraphim the Enduring of Sâmbăta de Sus

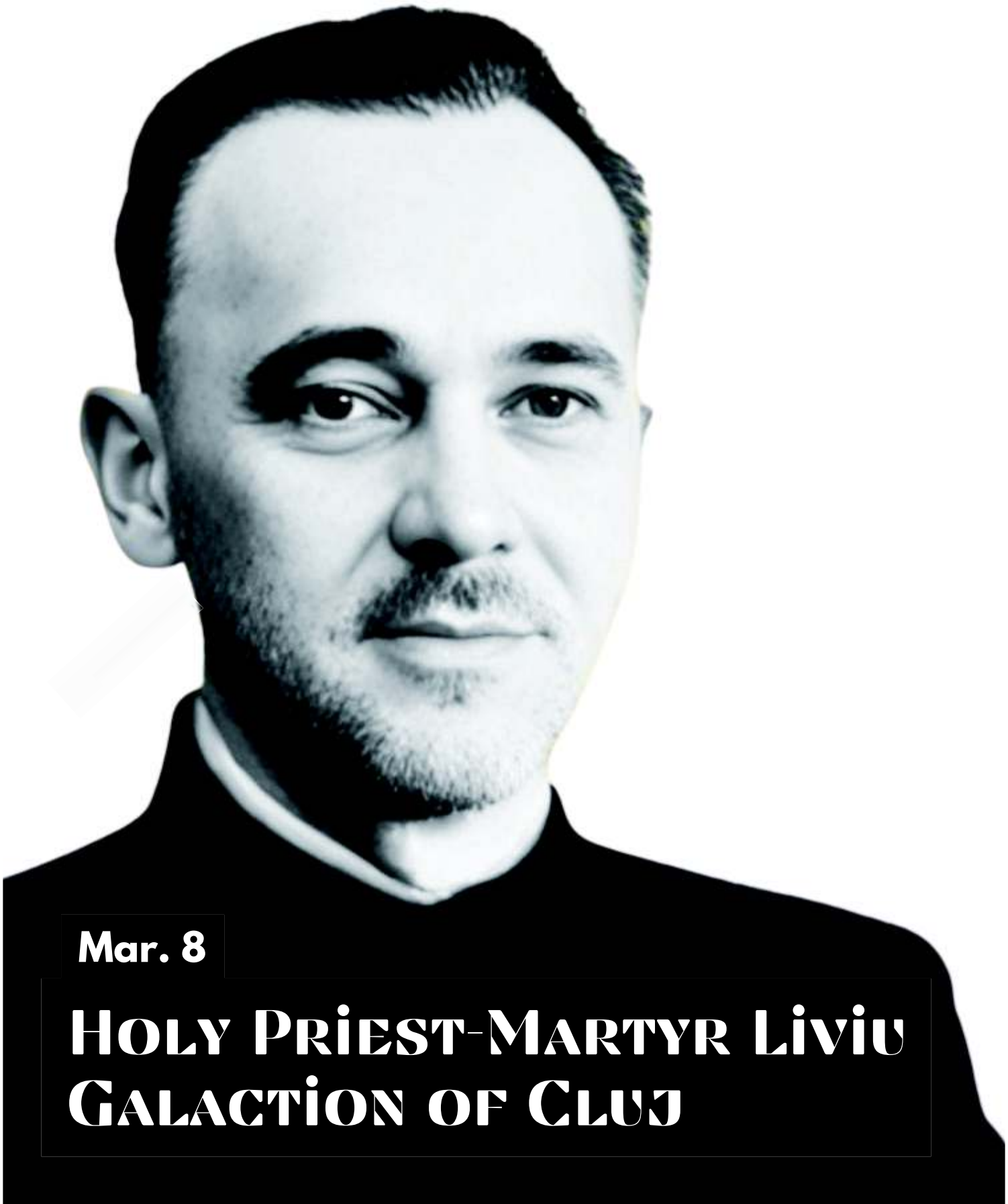
ST SERAPHIM THE ENDURING OF SÂMBĂTA DE SUS

BASILICA.RO

Saint Seraphim Popescu (1912 to 1990) was a Romanian monk, priest, theologian, and long-serving abbot of Brâncoveanu Monastery at Sâmbăta de Sus. A disciple and close co-worker of St Arsenius of Prislop, he studied on Mount Athos and in Athens, translated patristic writings, and devoted his life to reviving monastic life through prayer, humility, and wise spiritual guidance. During the communist era, he faithfully led his monastery for decades, becoming a beloved confessor and spiritual father who inspired countless faithful through his gentleness, charity, and unwavering witness to Christ. He was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 1:

O faithful, let us honour with praises Saint Seraphim, the lamp of virtue, the renowned spiritual guide, the teacher of patience from Sâmbăta de Sus Monastery, reverently crying to him as to a skilled father and intercessor: Glory to Him Whom you served! Glory to Him Who enlightened you! Glory to Him Who adorned you with wonderful gifts!



Mar. 8

Holy Priest-Martyr Liviu Galaction of Cluj

HOLY PRIEST-MARTYR LIVIU GALACTION OF CLUJ

BASILICA.RO

Saint Liviu Galaction (1898 to 1961) was a Romanian priest, theologian, professor, and rector of the Theological Academy of Cluj, whose life united scholarly excellence with courageous pastoral service. A devoted teacher and defender of the Orthodox faith, he remained with his flock during the persecution of Northern Transylvania, rescued Jewish youths during the Second World War, and later opposed the atheistic communist regime through his preaching and catechetical work. Arrested in 1958, he endured imprisonment, torture, and hard labour for his confession of Christ, and reposed in prison at Aiud in 1961. He was canonized in 2024.

Troparion, tone 8:

O Confessor of Orthodoxy, guide of youth and praise of teachers, Father Liviu Galaction, you enlightened all with your teachings; O supporter of those in trouble and passion-bearer for the true faith, pray to Christ God to save our souls.

Dec. 26

Holy Venerable Martyr Gerasimus of Tismana

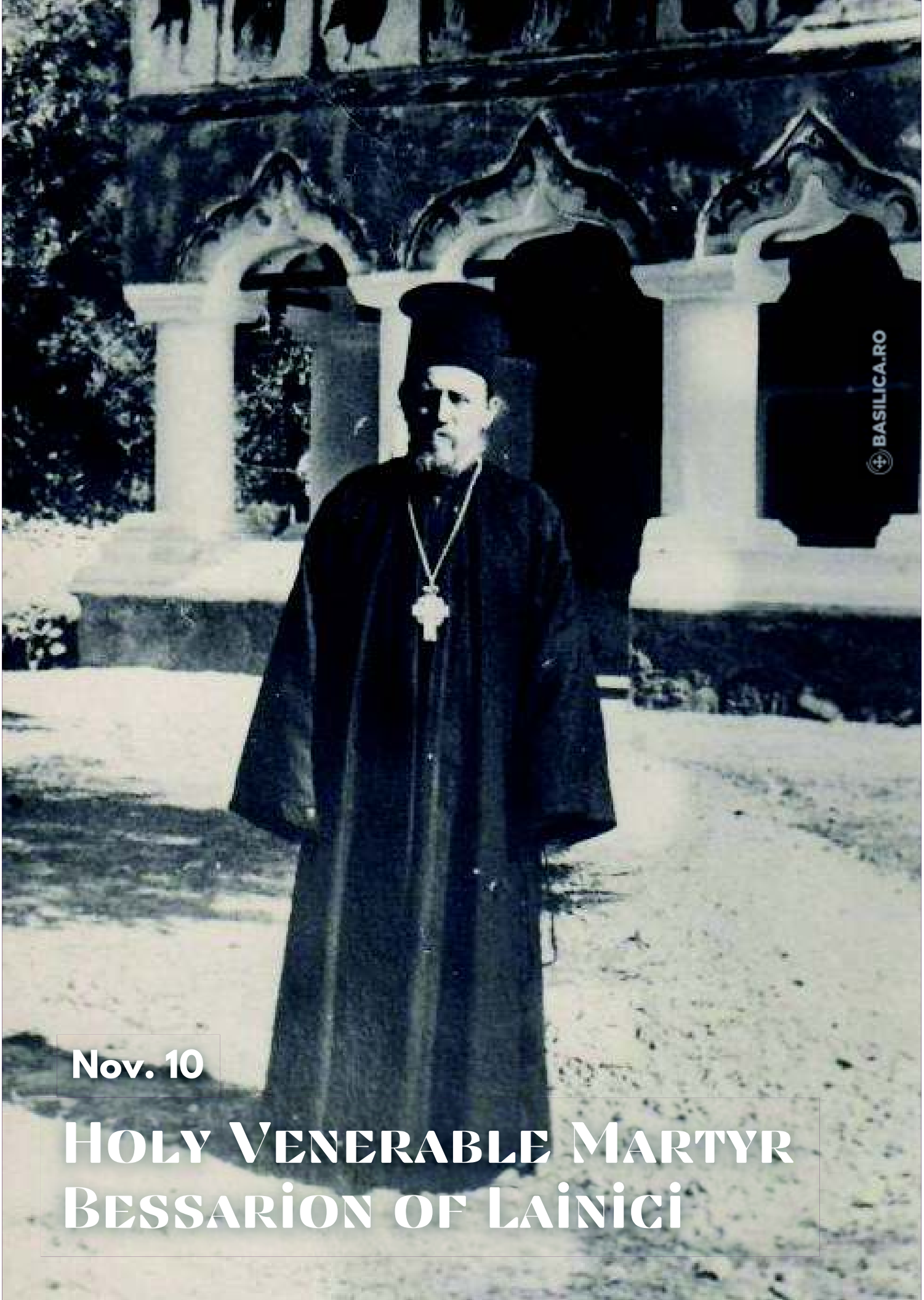
HOLY VENERABLE MARTYR GERASIMUS OF TISMANA

BASILICA.RO

Born in 1914, he was a Romanian monk, priest, preacher, and abbot of Tismana Monastery, renowned for his life of prayer, asceticism, and unwavering devotion to the Holy Fathers. He served with great sacrifice in Transnistria during the Second World War, restored monasteries and churches, and became a beloved spiritual father and confessor. Arrested by the communist regime, he endured years of imprisonment, torture, forced labour, and illness, continuing to secretly hear confessions and strengthen fellow prisoners in the faith. He reposed in the prison hospital at Târgu Ocna in 1962, leaving behind a lasting witness of forgiveness, humility, and hope. He was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 8:

Guide of monks and chosen adornment of confessors, Holy Father Gerasimus, the praise of Tismana, who is glorified in the company of martyrs and rejoices in heaven with Saint Nicodemus, pray to Christ our God to save our souls!



Nov. 10

Holy Venerable Martyr Bessarion of Lainici

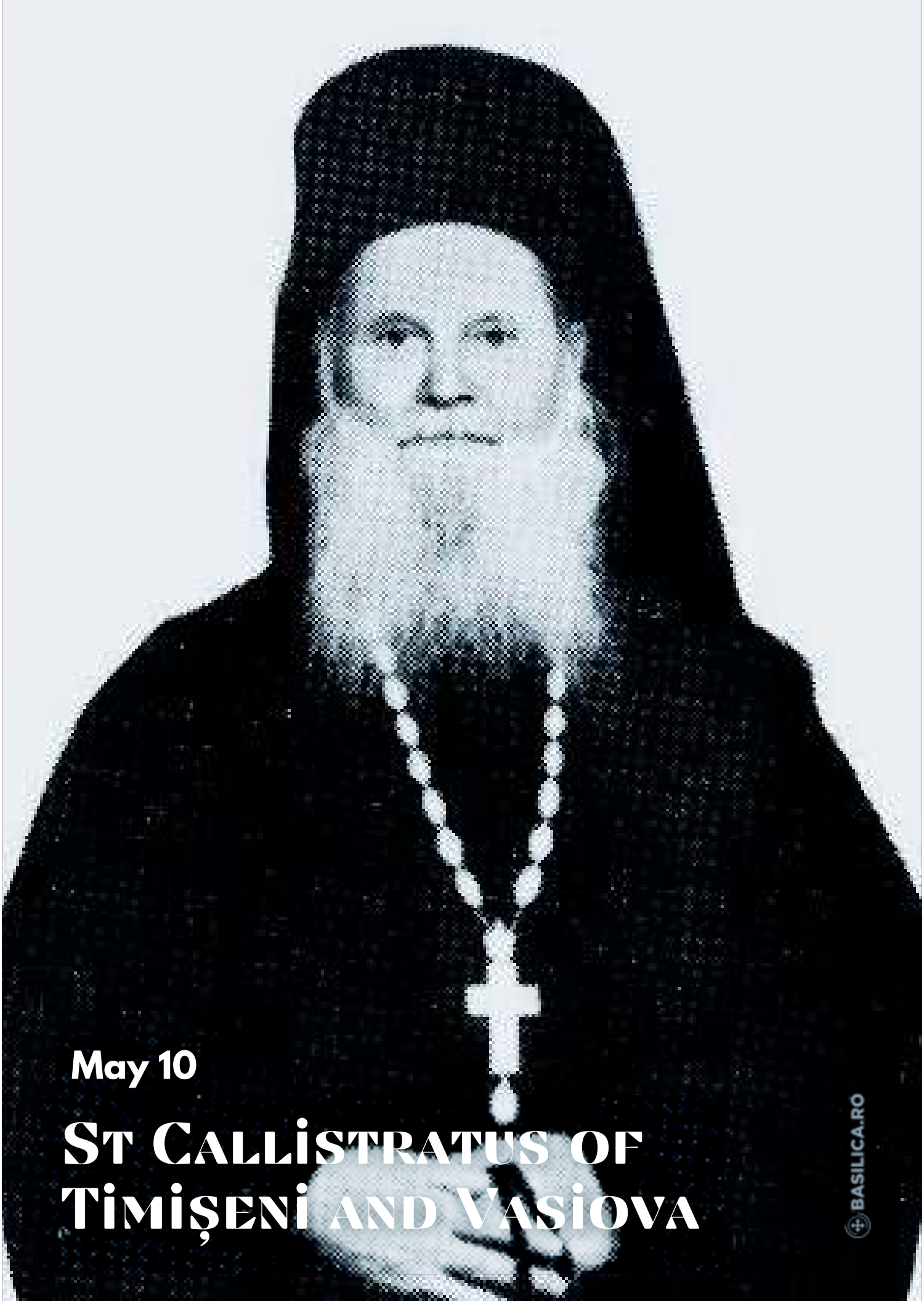
HOLY VENERABLE MARTYR BESSARION OF LAINICI

BASILICA.RO

St Bessarion of Lainici (1884 to 1951) was a Romanian monk, priest, and abbot who restored Lainici Monastery after World War I, fostering a flourishing community rooted in prayer, obedience, and the hesychast tradition of the Jesus Prayer. Renowned for his reverent celebration of the Divine Liturgy, spiritual guidance, healing prayers, and love for Byzantine chant, he also cared for the sick and helped preserve the relics of St Irodion of Lainici. After suffering a brutal beating at the hands of communist soldiers, he reposed in the Lord in 1951 following the amputation of his injured leg. He was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 3:

You showed wonderful work at the Lainici monastery, O Holy Father Bessarion; through fasting, vigils and prayer, through perfect love of God and your neighbour, you showed yourself a wonderworker. You suffered at the hands of unbelievers and were crowned with glory in heaven. Therefore, intercede with Christ God to save our souls.



May 10

St Callistratus of Timișeni and Vasiova

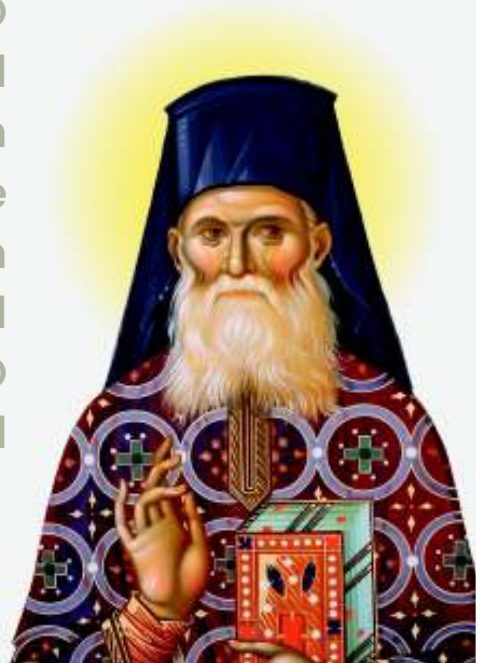
ST CALLISTRATUS OF TIMIȘENI AND VASIOVA

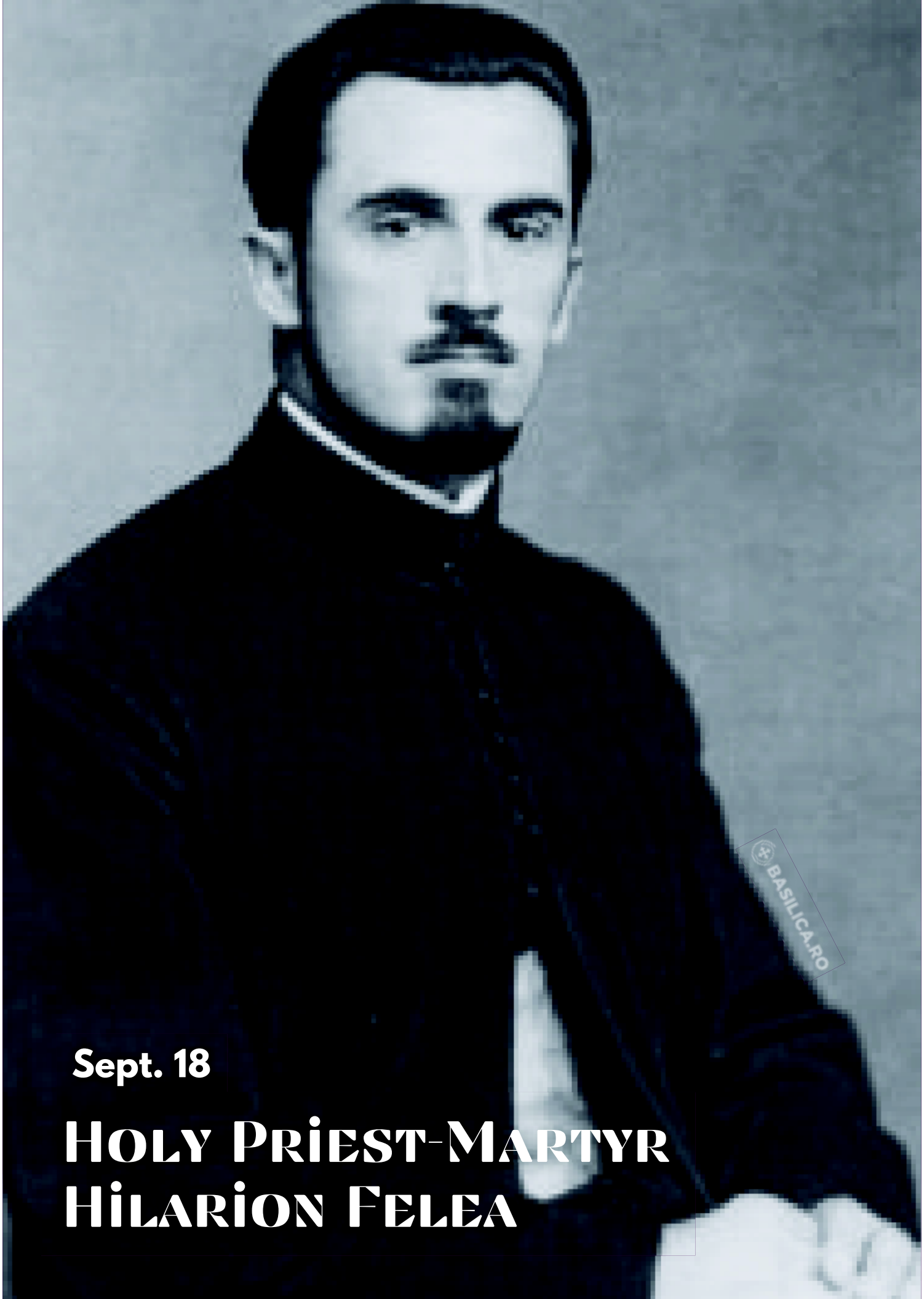
BASILICA.RO

Born in 1900, he was a Romanian monk, missionary priest, and founder of Timișeni Monastery, playing a decisive role in reviving monastic life in Banat. Originally from Burdujeni and formed at Sihăstria Monastery, he also renewed the monasteries of Săraca, Partoș, and Vasiova. For more than three decades, he was a beloved spiritual father, renowned for his humility, prayerful life, and pastoral zeal. Through his holiness, God granted him the gifts of healing and casting out unclean spirits. He reposed in the Lord on Pascha in 1975 and was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 8:

Taking up the cross of ascetic struggle, O wise one, you followed Christ and became an example of humility through obedience, teaching all the prayer of the heart and the guarding of a pure mind in the fear of God. Therefore, you received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and now, O Venerable Father Callistratus, your soul rejoices together with the angels.





Sept. 18

Holy Priest-Martyr Hilarion Felea

HOLY PRIEST-MARTYR HILARION FELEA

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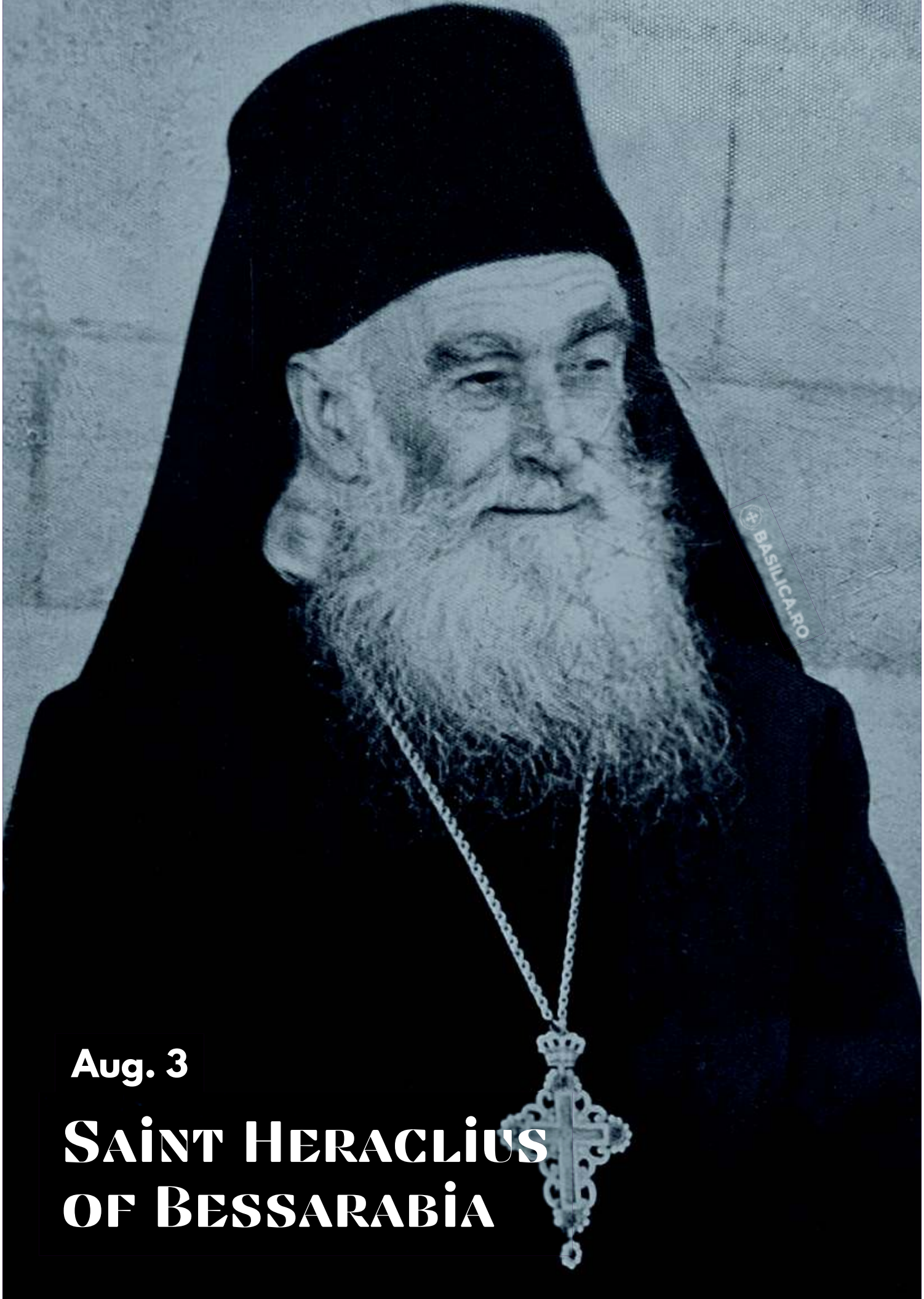
The Hieromartyr Hilarion Felea (1903 to 1961) was a Romanian priest, theologian, professor, and gifted preacher who devoted his life to pastoral ministry, theological education, and defending the Orthodox faith. Serving in the Diocese of Arad, he became renowned for his powerful sermons, spiritual guidance, and influential theological writings, inspiring clergy and laity alike. Persecuted by the communist regime for his unwavering confession of Christ, he endured repeated arrests, torture, and imprisonment before reposing as a martyr in Aiud Prison in 1961 after being denied medical care. He was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 1:

You proclaimed the word of the Gospel, proving yourself a worthy shepherd of your flock, and hastened to the heavenly Tabor, following in the Passion of the Lord. Therefore, O our Father Hilarion, you now rejoice in the glory of the Godhead. Pray to Christ our God to have mercy on our souls.



Aug. 3

Saint Heraclius of Bessarabia

SAINT HERACLIUS OF BESSARABIA

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Born in 1893, he was a Romanian hieromonk, preacher, spiritual father, and monastic leader who devoted his life to serving the Church in Bessarabia. Renowned for his eloquent preaching, pastoral care, and theological learning, he guided monasteries, translated spiritual writings, and encouraged the faithful through years of war and persecution. Arrested by the Soviet regime in 1945, he endured eight years in labour camps, continuing to strengthen fellow prisoners in the Orthodox faith. After his release, he remained a humble spiritual father until his repose in 1964. His relics were rediscovered in 2022, and he was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 4:

Today the assembly of monks and faithful in Bessarabia praises you, O Saint Heraclius, and honours your glorious memory, for you enlightened us through the light of the Scriptures, the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, and the teachings of the Holy Fathers. Therefore, we beseech you: intercede for our souls.

Aug. 8

Holy Priest-Martyr Alexander of Bessarabia

HOLY PRIEST-MARTYR ALEXANDER OF BESSARABIA

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Born in 1861, he was a Romanian priest, pastor, and defender of the Orthodox faith in Bessarabia, renowned for his tireless pastoral ministry, educational work, and commitment to preserving the Romanian language and Orthodox identity. He helped revive Orthodox publishing in Chișinău, represented the clergy in the Council of the Country, and voted for the Union of Bessarabia with Romania in 1918. After the Soviet occupation, he refused to abandon his flock, was arrested during the Divine Liturgy, and endured imprisonment, torture, and deportation before reposing as a martyr in a prison in Kazan in 1941. He was canonised in 2024.

Troparion, tone 4:

By proclaiming the Gospel in both word and deed, and labouring unceasingly as a priest of the Lord, you faithfully served the Church, O Father Alexander, holy hieromartyr. Having offered yourself as a sacrifice to Christ, now boldly intercede for all who honour you.